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**KEREVER PARK:
A HISTORY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF
TEACHERS AND CHILDREN IN A CATHOLIC GIRLS'
PREPARATORY BOARDING SCHOOL
1944-1965**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a history of a small Catholic girls' preparatory boarding school which operated in rural NSW from 1944 until 1965. The school was conducted by the Society of the Sacred Heart and was mainly staffed by young religious, who undertook the teaching, and older coadjutrix sisters who undertook the domestic work. The children, generally aged between five and thirteen, came from middle-class families in Sydney and rural areas. In that period the religious order was enclosed and members led, apart from their educational work, a monastic lifestyle. While early aspirations for the school were that it be more in keeping with the children's home life, the educational ideology of the orders' other schools prevailed and the children led a life closely aligned to that of the religious.

The orientation of this thesis, in contrast to that of traditional school histories, is on the experience of those involved and, in particular, on the interplay between the construction of that experience and school ideology. Theoretical underpinnings are taken from poststructuralist and feminist theory. What constituted school ideology has been identified by a discursive analysis of written documents and sacred symbols associated with the school. One agenda for the writing of the history has been to allow the experiences of those usually marginalised in school histories, that is students and general staff, to surface within the main body of the text. In keeping with this agenda, a group of fourteen ex-students and religious were interviewed using an unstructured format, and the narratives presented as case studies. However, in keeping with poststructuralist theory, the narratives are not given full authority. Rather, they are examined as discursive productions which provide valuable insight into the social order of the school and how each person found meaning within the discourses available to them, positioned themselves in relation to those discourses and achieved agency within the setting.

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Writing a thesis is not always a solitary occupation. My work has been greatly assisted by Rose Bay archivists, Sister Leila Barlow and Sister Marie Kennedy, who gave me much practical assistance in identifying the ideology of the Society in the 1940s and 1950s. Seven other members of the order also made this work possible by being prepared to open their lives to me and to have their stories go on public record. As a result of the way in which these women participated and the stories of their struggles to remain faithful to their central beliefs, often in difficult circumstances, I continue to hold the members of the Society in great esteem. Seven ex-students were also prepared to share their experiences of Kerever Park. Sitting with them as they spoke so openly of their days there affirmed for me the individuality of each life and the inherent struggle for meaning within it. Finally, I am grateful to Enid and Charles Stevenson who also shared their experience of Kerever Park and, thereby, added another perspective and valuable information to this history.

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CHAPTER ONE

FINDING THE PROCESS/FINDING THE PLOT

In 1944 a junior 'preparatory' boarding school of Rose Bay Convent, a secondary girls' boarding school conducted by the Society of the Sacred Heart, was opened in a rural area south of Sydney (NSW). The Society of the Sacred Heart is a French order founded in 1800 with Madeleine Sophie Barat (now a canonised saint) as the foundress.¹ The establishment of the school was the result of a war-time evacuation of children which took the children away from the vulnerable Sydney Harbour area into the safety of rural Bowral.² When hostilities ceased and the children were able to return to Sydney, Mother Dorothy McGuinness, then superior of the Australian and New Zealand province of the Society, decided to establish a permanent junior boarding school in the area. In the evacuation period, rented properties were used but, when a permanent property was found at nearby Burradoo, it was re-named, *Kerever Park*, after the previous superior general of the Society, Mother Alix de Keréver. The school continued in these premises as a boarding school for approximately sixty children each year from 1944 until it was closed at the end of 1965. This thesis is a history of that school. It is also the story of my own background, as it is the school I attended for four years from the age of seven.

Barbara Finkelstein has offered a critique of educational history, arguing that there is a tendency to focus on educational *structure* rather than *behaviour*. A consequence of this orientation, she writes, is that the inner

¹ For broad discussions of the Society and its educational traditions, see Donald Cave, 'The pedagogical traditions of the religious of the Sacred Heart in France and Australia', in Imelda Palma (ed.), *Melbourne Studies in Education*, Melbourne, University of Melbourne Press, 1985, pp. 28-73 and Margaret Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart: history of a spirit, 1800-1975*, London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978.

² Bowral is located in the Southern Highlands about 100 kilometres south of Sydney. The address of the school is actually Burradoo which lies a few kilometres out of Bowral. Burradoo has no shopping centre, although there is a railway station.

individual processes which lead to the shaping of consciousness and how education is used in everyday life beyond the pursuit of power and status has generally been overlooked. Finkelstein argues that, if historians are to go beyond 'the study of structure, macro-politics and economics and the lives of the élites,' they will 'need to analyze education as something experienced as well as planned'.³ Traditionally, in school histories, the experience of school life has been *used* rather than *actively* studied. It has been *used* in that recollections of past students have been employed anecdotally to provide the human element to writings about what feminists would call 'the public face' of the school. In some instances, individual recollections actually provide the history, with the historian acting as editor. When interviews have been undertaken, they provide support for generalisations about what Clifford Geertz would call the 'hard surfaces of life'⁴ to do with structure, planning and outcomes.

This thesis is a response to Finkelstein's challenge, in that the general aim is to move away from a history focused on school structure and planning towards a history in which the focus is on the experience of those involved in the school and on the inner individual processes which lead to the formation of what may be called consciousness. In moving towards an emphasis on experience, however, I do not seek to leave structure and planning behind. In the theoretical framework which informs this thesis, the ideology (the discourses of the dominating group)⁵ behind structure and planning and the discursive practices reflected in experience are powerfully connected. In many ways, within this history, I have imagined

³ Barbara Finkelstein, 'Educational historians as mythmakers', *Review of Research in Education*, vol. 18, 1992, p. 288. In her own work Finkelstein has focused on integrating structure and consciousness. See Barbara Finkelstein, 'Reading, writing, and the acquisition of identity in the United States: 1790-1860', in Barbara Finkelstein (ed.), *Regulated children / liberated children: education in psychohistorical perspective*, New York, Psychohistory Press, 1979, pp. 114-139 and Barbara Finkelstein, *Governing the young: teacher behaviour in popular primary schools in 19th century United States*, Lewes (East Sussex), Falmer Press, 1989.

⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, Basic Books, 1973.

⁵ Definition of ideology taken from Monique Wittig, cited in Teresa de Lauretis, 'Feminist studies/critical studies: issues, terms, and contexts', in Teresa de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist studies: critical studies*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986, p. 6.

the school as a space which was constructed by a number of discursive practices, practices which may be considered to represent the ideology of the school. Within this space, these practices impacted on the consciousness of both students and religious.⁶ Yet the students and religious were not passive as they concurrently contributed to the maintenance of these practices, resisted them and created their own meanings. It is my hypothesis that in focusing on the experience of individuals it is possible to gain insight into the formation of consciousness. Such an approach also brings the voices of those involved in the school - voices which are generally marginalised in most school histories - into a central place within the construction of the history and allows them to challenge any temptation to locate the history purely within the boundaries of ideology.

Theoretical Perspectives

The work of this thesis is informed by poststructuralist and feminist theory. In referring to the project of feminism, I refer to feminist critical practice which seeks to reveal how gender power relations are 'constituted, reproduced and contested' within social and cultural practices.⁷ As such, feminism is a political action. Chris Weedon writes that what may be termed *feminist poststructuralism* 'is a mode of knowledge production which uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change'.⁸ In the following section, I seek to explore poststructuralist theory and ways in which it contributes to feminist practice, particularly practice which is exemplified within this thesis.

6 The school was staffed by nuns who refer to themselves as religious, hence, my use of the term. The term is also broader than teachers in that not all religious within the school taught although they were part of the school system.

7 Chris Weedon, *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1987, p. vii.

8 *ibid.* pp. 40-41.

Poststructuralist theory, in the tradition of Nietzsche and Heidegger, as expounded in the writings of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean Francois Lyotard and Jacques Lacan, may be summarised in the following points (although not all poststructuralists would subscribe to all points).

1. Absolute knowledge (truth) does not exist.
2. Human beings create their own reality through language and therefore lives may be read as text.
3. In turn, humans are created by the ebb and flow and the tensions between discourses, therefore, not only is there no such thing as the essential and unified human, humans also have variable agency in constituting themselves.
4. All texts (stories) have different meanings as they are filtered through language, ideology and culture.
5. There are no general theories or 'meta-narratives' which explain society, only a multiplicity of discourses by positioned writers.
6. A discourse may become a dominant discourse, and be used to explain society, not because it is true but because those who use it have the power to make it true.

The notion of discourse is central in the poststructuralist view of reality as being humanly constructed. Moreover, the meaning of 'discourse' is an evolving process - there is no one definition. Foucault is considered to be a key figure in formulating an understanding of discourse. Thomas Flynn argues that Foucault's interpretation of discourse is 'discourse as *practice*'⁹ in that Foucault, in utilising the notion of discourse, is referring to a 'preconceptual, anonymous, socially sanctioned body of rules that govern one's manner of perceiving, judging, imagining, and acting'.¹⁰ Foucault himself defined practice as 'the point of linkage (*enchaînement*) of what one says and what one does, of the rules one prescribes to oneself and the

⁹ Thomas Flynn, 'Foucault's mapping of history,' in Gary Gutting (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Foucault*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 29.

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 30.

reasons one ascribes, of projects and of evidence'.¹¹ As such, practices are both '*judicative*', in that they 'establish and apply norms, controls, and exclusions', and '*veridicative*' in that they 'render true/false discourse possible'.¹² Hence discourses set 'the conditions of inclusion or exclusion that enable certain practices and prevent others from being accepted as "scientific", or "moral", or whatever other social rubric may be in use at a particular epoch'.¹³ Based on this understanding of discourse as practice, Foucault argued for, and practised in his own work, 'studies of discursive practices in the ethical, aesthetic, and political fields'.¹⁴

The concept of discourse, according to Weedon and to other feminist poststructuralists,¹⁵ is central in that through a study of it 'feminist poststructuralism is able, in detailed, historically specific analysis, to explain the working of power on behalf of specific interests and to analyse the opportunities for resistance to it'.¹⁶ In keeping with Foucault, Weedon argues that discourses represent political interests which are constantly 'vying for status and power' and the site of this battle is the construction of the subjectivities of the individual.¹⁷ Hence individuals are constantly subjected to discourses which both shape their experience and also what has, until recently, been termed their identity or sense of self.

11 Cited in Flynn, p. 30.

12 *ibid.*

13 *ibid.*

14 *ibid.* Gérard Noirel, in his discussion of Foucault's place as a historian, refers to Foucault's distinguishing of his work from that of historians: 'From its inception my project differed from that of historians. For better or for worse, they posit "society" as the general horizon of their analysis and the background in relation to which they must situate a given object ("society, economy, civilisation"). My general theme is not society but the discourse of the true and the false.' Foucault, cited in Gérard Noirel, 'Foucault and history: the lessons of a disillusion,' *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 66, no. 3, 1994, p. 549.

15 See, for example, Bronwyn Davies, *Poststructuralist theory and classroom practice*, Geelong(Victoria), Deakin University Press, 1994.

16 Weedon, p. 41.

17 *ibid.*

In theoretical explanations of what may be termed liberal-humanist thought,¹⁸ 'identity' has been viewed as a unified structure attained, to a degree, in early adulthood.¹⁹ This view has been challenged. For example, Alberto Melucci, employing poststructuralist theory, writes that 'we cannot treat our identity as a "thing", as the monolithic unity of a subject; instead, it should be conceived of as a system of relations and representation'.²⁰ According to Melucci, 'identity is in the process of being redefined as a pure self-reflexive capacity or self-awareness'²¹ and he suggests that it is not so much a 'situation' as 'an action'.²² Hence, it should be referred to as 'identization' reflecting the 'processual, self-reflexive, and constructed manner in which we define ourselves'.²³ Similarly, feminist writers have preferred to move away from using the term 'identity', which reflects a 'unitary non-contradictory self', into the use of 'subjectivity' which reflects the diversity of who we are as we are positioned 'inside one set of power relations or another, constituted through one discourse or another, in one context or another'.²⁴ As Weedon expresses it: 'Against this irreducible humanist essence of identity, poststructuralism proposes a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak.'²⁵

The shift to the concept of 'subjectivity' rather than 'identity' is critical in the political projects of feminism and reflects a movement away from the essentialist category of 'woman'. As Denise Riley writes, there is a need

18 *ibid.* p. 8.

19 For example, the work of Erik Erikson and James Marcia. See Erik Erikson, *Identity, youth, and crisis*, New York, W.W. Norton, 1950 and James Marcia, 'Identity in adolescence', in J. Adelson (ed.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology*, New York, Wiley, 1980, pp. 159-187.

20 Alberto Melucci, *The playing self: person and meaning in the planetary society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 33.

21 *ibid.* p. 36.

22 *ibid.* p. 31.

23 *ibid.*

24 Davies, p. 3.

25 Weedon, p. 33.

for feminists to be wary of the 'vagaries' of the category of women²⁶ and to proceed with the belief that "women" don't exist - while maintaining a politics of "as if they existed"'.²⁷ Utilising this perspective within history has meant that the focus of feminist history has moved away from being located purely within the bounds of gender in which women are defined as 'Woman' (other than 'Man') towards, as Linda Gordon suggests, a 'collective goal that transcends the victim/heroine, domination/resistance dualism and incorporates the varied experiences of women'.²⁸

The notion of 'positioning' is central in this view of subjectivity and refers to that process whereby we situate ourselves in relation to various discourses. Yet as individuals we do not simply *place* ourselves within a particular discourse. Weedon writes that 'individuals are both the *site* and *subjects* of discursive struggle for their identity' and that this 'interpellation of subjects within particular discourses' is never final and remains open to challenge.²⁹ It may also be considered that subjectivity is multiple as we position ourselves in alignment with the various discourses available to us, some of which may sit uneasily with each other.

Not only do discourses, representing particular interests, both represent and vie for status and power in the construction of subjectivity but also in the construction of experience. 'What an event means to an individual depends on the ways of interpreting the world, on the discourses available to her at any particular moment.'³⁰ Hence experience is the production of various interpretations which arise out of discourse. Joan Scott has

26 Denise Riley, 'Am I that name?' *Feminism and the category of 'women' in history*, London, Macmillan Press, 1988, p. 113.

27 *ibid.* p. 112.

28 Linda Gordon, 'What's new in women's history?', in de Lauretis, *Feminist studies: critical studies*, p. 25.

29 Weedon, p. 97.

30 *ibid.* p. 79.

warned those historians of difference, who seek to utilise 'experience' in a corrective manner, against the temptation to view 'experience' as authoritative and non-problematic, hence reifying it and negating its constituted nature.³¹ Riley argues that in focusing on 'women's experience' there is an assumption that the experience originates with them. Such an assumption, she continues, masks 'the likelihood that instead these [experiences] have been accrued to women not by virtue of their womanhood alone, but as traces of domination'.³² In contrast to viewing experience as authoritative and non-problematic, Teresa de Lauretis has defined experience and the construction of subjectivity as being inextricably linked.

I use the term [experience] not in the individualistic, idiosyncratic sense of something belonging to one and exclusively her own even though others might have 'similar' experiences; but rather in the general sense of a process by which, for all social beings subjectivity is constructed. Through that process one places oneself or is placed in social reality, and so perceives and comprehends as subjective (referring to, even originating in, oneself) those relations - material, economic, and interpersonal - which are in fact social and, in a larger perspective, historical. The process is continuous, its achievement unending or daily renewed. For each person, therefore, subjectivity is an ongoing construction, not a fixed point of departure or arrival from which one then interacts with the world. On the contrary, it is the effect of that interaction - which I call experience; and thus it is produced not by external ideas, values, or material causes, but by one's personal, subjective, engagement in the practices, discourses, and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning, and affect) to the events of the world.³³

From this perspective, 'experience' is constructed through 'engagement' in the world, and consciousness, rather than being 'a continuous stream . . . [is a] fragmented and contradictory effect of a discursive battle for the subjectivity of the individual'.³⁴

31 Joan Scott, ' "Experience" ', in Judith Butler & Joan Scott (eds), *Feminists theorize the political*, New York, Routledge, 1992, pp. 22-40.

32 Riley, p. 99.

33 Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice doesn't: feminism, semiotics, cinema*, London, Macmillan, 1984, p. 159.

34 Weedon, p. 105.

Poststructuralist arguments that experience, consciousness and subjectivity are constructed by discourse are supported by recent research into memory. For example, James Fentress and Chris Wickham write that memory is both subjective (that is, that we actively 'construct' memory) and social (structured by language, teaching, observing, collectively held ideas, and experiences shared with others).³⁵ The notion of memory as constructed is not new. In 1932, Fredric Bartlett published his pioneering work in which he espoused his theory that memory, the term for that aspect of the human brain from which we speak our experience, is a reconstruction which serves the purpose of maintaining our current state, in contrast to considering it as a storage system.³⁶ He argued that we construct our memories as if we were saying: 'This and this *must* have occurred, in order that my present state should be what it is.'³⁷ His argument that memory is 'not only a reflection of content, but [is] also determined by the intentions and predispositions of the remembering individuals' has led to further investigation into how memory is constructed and how this construction shapes our 'experience' of the world.³⁸ Memory theorists who have built upon Bartlett's work, David Middleton and Derek Edwards for example, have employed what they call a 'discourse-analytical' approach to memory. They conclude that people's accounts of the past need to be examined as 'contextualized and variable productions that do pragmatic and rhetorical work'.³⁹ John Shotter, writing from a similar approach, argues that the aim of this rhetorical work is to 'constitute and maintain one or another kind of social order'.⁴⁰ Within this argument, experience becomes problematic rather than authoritative, as Shotter expresses it:

³⁵ James Fentress & Chris Wickham, *Social memory*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992, p. 7.

³⁶ Fredric C. Bartlett, *Remembering: a study in experimental and social psychology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1932.

³⁷ Cited in John Shotter, 'The social construction of remembering and forgetting', in David Middleton & Derek Edwards (eds), *Collective remembering*, London, Sage, 1990, p. 125.

³⁸ Fentress & Wickham, p. 36.

³⁹ David Middleton & Derek Edwards, 'Conversational remembering: a social psychological approach', in Middleton & Edwards, *Collective remembering*, p. 37.

⁴⁰ Shotter, p. 123.

It is *not* the primary function of all our talk to represent the world; words do not primarily stand for things. If, in our experience, it seems undeniable that at least some words do in fact denote things, they do so only from within a form of social life *already constituted* by ways of talking in which these words are used . . . this approach implies that we cannot take our 'lived' experience as in any way basic. Indeed, from this point of view it becomes a problem as to why at this moment in history, we account for our experience of ourselves as we do.⁴¹

June Crawford, Susan Kippax, Jenny Obyx, Una Gault and Pam Benton, also memory theorists, argue that 'what is paramount in our memories is a search for meaning, an active attempt by us to make sense of our experience'.⁴² They describe this search for meaning as the search for 'intelligibility' and argue that the memories which remain with us arise from instances in which this search for intelligibility has been difficult due to unfamiliarity, conflict, or contradiction which might have been present, and the lack of resolution.⁴³ In particular, they suggest that those things we remember 'are often of occasions where the responses of others were not congruent with our expectations [our own meanings]'.⁴⁴ What we forget, according to these researchers, is either what is unproblematic, what is considered to be mundane, trivial, normal, or else it is what is highly problematic for us in that it is too threatening and/or painful. Some of this material is, of course, retrievable.⁴⁵ Importantly, they point out that it is our memories and our individual struggle for meaning which give us our sense of uniqueness and our sense of individual subjectivity.⁴⁶

Crawford et al. consider that agency is constituted in the process of individual search for meaning which is in common with the meaning

⁴¹ *ibid.* p. 121.

⁴² June Crawford, Susan Kippax, Jenny Obyx, Una Gault & Pam Benton, *Emotion and gender: constructing meaning from memory*, London, Sage, 1992, p. 9.

⁴³ *ibid.* p. 38.

⁴⁴ *ibid.* p. 9.

⁴⁵ *ibid.* pp. 155-158.

⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 155.

others hold about a particular event. Within this search, the meaning we attribute to a particular event may not be the same as the meaning held by others within the immediate context. There are many 'others' and not all are immediately present. The outcome of this search for common meaning, these writers suggest, may at times lead to a sense of competence [agency] when our struggle is valued, but on the other hand, denial of our personal struggle may lead to a sense of social incompetence [personal powerlessness].⁴⁷ In this process, they argue that agency, which is made possible by 'the human ability to reflect and evaluate, resides in choice'.⁴⁸

Crawford and her co-writers' definition of agency is in keeping with Weedon's understanding of the role of the individual in achieving meaning. As already indicated, Weedon argues that the site of discursive struggles takes place within the consciousness of the individual.⁴⁹ She also considers that the individual is not passive in this struggle.

The individual who has a memory and an already discursively constituted sense of identity may resist particular interpellations or produce new versions of meaning from the conflicts and contradictions between existing discourses. Knowledge of more than one discourse and the recognition that meaning is plural allows for a measure of choice on the part of the individual and even where choice is not available, resistance is still possible.⁵⁰

Yet the choice of one discourse over another is not, in Weedon's understanding, separate from politics and power. Rather, our choice of one discourse over another is influenced by 'the political strength of the

⁴⁷ *ibid.* p. 112. In their explanation of agency, the writers jump from speaking about agency to speaking about social competence without making satisfactory links. My placement of [agency] and [personal powerlessness] next to their references to competence and social incompetence, respectively, is intended to link these two concepts.

⁴⁸ *ibid.* p. 90.

⁴⁹ Weedon, p. 106.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

interests which they represent'.⁵¹ That is, we recognise that the choice of alignment with a particular discourse aligns us in relationship to power. Wendy Hollway implicitly redirects the emphasis in this argument away from a focus on 'choice' towards an emphasis on 'investment' in a particular position of power.⁵² For example, our investment may be in those who hold authority in the immediate context. Alternatively, we may align ourselves with those who form a power group outside the immediate context and which holds power through resisting the dominant discourses.⁵³

Foucault has been significant in revealing the power of discourse in structuring modern life. He argued that in the period following the French Revolution there was a movement away from social control through massive but infrequent exercises of destructive force such as public executions, towards a new technology of control.

The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it It defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies.⁵⁴

In Foucault's thesis, the individual turns herself/himself into a subject and enters into a construction of self which is in keeping with the demands of the culture and social group.⁵⁵ Hollway argues that, while

⁵¹ *ibid.* p. 26.

⁵² Wendy Hollway, 'Gender difference and the production of subjectivity', in Julian Henriques, Wendy Hollway, Cathy Urwin, Couze Venn & Valerie Walkerdine (eds), *Changing the subject: psychology, social regulation and subjectivity*, London, Methuen, 1984, p. 238.

⁵³ In referring to this last category, I am reminded of feminist Catholic women who identify with some discourses of the Church but who resist others in favour of feminist discourses which are not part of Church ideology.

⁵⁴ Cited in Joseph Rouse, 'Power/knowledge', in Gutting, p. 95.

⁵⁵ Lois McNay, *Foucault and feminism*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992, p. 61.

Foucault 'stresse[d] the mutually constitutive relation between power and knowledge: how each constitutes the other to produce the truths of a particular epoch . . . he d[id] not account for how people are constituted as a result of certain truths being current rather than others'.⁵⁶ Drawing in particular on the work of Lacan, Hollway argues that by paying attention to the histories of individuals it is possible to locate the *investments* (and resultant satisfactions, pay-offs or rewards) the person makes in positioning themselves in relation to certain discourses.⁵⁷ She notes that these investments are not always conscious or rational and that the satisfactions attained may stand in contradiction with other feelings.⁵⁸ Hollway's understanding of individual investment and the way it is historically inserted into the individual's subjectivity is based upon the idea that 'current at any one time are competing, potentially contradictory discourses . . . rather than a single patriarchal ideology'.⁵⁹

This account of the process of the construction of subjectivity, positioning of oneself in/against various power relations and discourses, and the resultant sense of agency and/or powerlessness provides insight into how women have participated in the construction of themselves as gendered beings.⁶⁰ Yet it also provides an understanding of how women have resisted the construction of themselves as gendered beings (or indeed how any individuals resist compulsion to construct them as any type of being) and how, in the search for intelligibility, women have sought to create their own meanings against the meanings of the predominant group. Hollway concludes that there is a need to explore 'what accounts for the

⁵⁶ Hollway, p. 237.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 238.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ *ibid.* p. 237.

⁶⁰ Frigga Haug (ed.), *Female sexualization: a collective work of memory*, translated by Erica Carter, London, Verso, 1987 (1983), p. 59.

different investments produced historically in people of the same gender'.⁶¹

Crawford et al. state that what constitutes our memories are our struggle, including our childhood struggle, to wrestle meaning within the social order, even as our subjectivity and our emotions are, in turn, already and ongoingly constituted by that social order.⁶² For feminist researchers such as Crawford et al. and Frigga Haug, undertaking analysis of how women construct themselves in various ways is a method of making conscious how they have unconsciously interpreted the world.⁶³ According to Crawford et al., 'while our memories are about us as individuals, they also say much about the social order [the world] in which we constituted ourselves'.⁶⁴ Haug argues that anything that is remembered is relevant precisely because it is remembered and for the part it played in the formation of identity. 'We therefore decode the details of our stories as written signs of the relations within which identity is formed.'⁶⁵ Crawford et al. also consider that by deconstructing language, especially that of clichés, we may get at some of the underlying unquestioned assumptions of that moral order.⁶⁶

Fentress and Wickham take up the issue of the relationship of individual memory to social memory - social life already constituted.⁶⁷ They define social memory as the memories of a group, usually conveyed in writing or images, which 'identifies a group, giving it a sense of its past and defining its aspirations for the future'.⁶⁸ They argue that all memory is social in that it is structured by 'language, by teaching and observing, and

⁶¹ Hollway, p. 239.

⁶² Crawford et al., pp. 111-112.

⁶³ Haug, p. 60.

⁶⁴ Crawford et al., p. 9.

⁶⁵ Haug, p. 50.

⁶⁶ Crawford et al., p. 9.

⁶⁷ Fentress & Wickham, pp. 24-25

⁶⁸ *ibid.* p. 25.

by experiences shared with others'.⁶⁹ While individual memory includes memories that seem to pertain more to the individual than to the group, the way in which we reconstruct these memories is invariably tied into the social world. We construct our experience according to the discourses available to us at a particular time. As Middleton and Edwards write, 'original experience' is not objective, rather it is also an example of 'output' in that 'what we have is two discourses at different points in time, each doing constructive work on what everyone is doing, seeing and thinking'.⁷⁰

Researchers into the construction of social memory have highlighted the discursive work of symbols and myths. For example, Fentress and Wickham state that social memory is 'composed from a mixture of pictorial images and scenes, slogans, quips and snatches of verse, abstraction, plot types and stretches of discourse, and even false etymologies'.⁷¹ In order to transmit images and to make them meaningful to an entire group, they must be conventionalised and simplified.⁷² Alan Radley, writing on the place of artefacts within social memory, defines them as material images which bring into relationship attitudes and interests which constrain and are formative in subjectivity.⁷³ Similarly, Barry Schwartz argues that epic heroes are constructed in order to remind people of their 'ideals rather than their actual conduct and feelings'.⁷⁴ 'The traits most celebrated in great leaders reflect the main premises of their culture.'⁷⁵ Roland Barthes has warned that in such constructions myths may appropriate objects, concepts or

⁶⁹ *ibid.* p. 7.

⁷⁰ Middleton & Edwards, 'Conversational remembering', p. 43.

⁷¹ Fentress & Wickham, p. 47.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ Alan Radley, 'Artefacts, memory and a sense of the past', in Middleton & Edwards, *Collective remembering*, p. 56.

⁷⁴ Barry Schwartz, 'The reconstruction of Abraham Lincoln', in Middleton & Edwards, *Collective remembering*, p. 98.

⁷⁵ *ibid.* p. 94.

ideas in order to convey a particular message and in the process contingency and historical context are left behind.⁷⁶ It could be argued that many school histories serve similar functions, focusing as they do on ideology and planning rather than behaviour and feeling. In contrast, the construction of symbols and epic figures associated with a school may be interrogated in order to locate the constraining discourses and their place in the formation of subjectivity. Exploration of social memory as conveyed through written text, symbols, songs, artefacts and the construction of leaders is central within this thesis. It is central as a way in to exploring the dominant discourses of the school both within social memory and individual memory. Weedon also writes that 'it is a consistent feature of most forms of discourses that they deny their own partiality'.⁷⁷ As Fentress and Wickham suggest, historians need to 'situate groups in relation to their own traditions, asking how they interpret their own "ghosts", and how they use them as a source of knowledge'.⁷⁸

Jane Flax summarises poststructuralist thinking as a rejection of 'representational and objective or relational concepts of knowledge and truth; grand, synthetic theorizing meant to comprehend Reality as and in a unified whole; and any concept of self or subjectivity in which it is not understood as produced as an effect of discursive practices'.⁷⁹ This results in denial of all essentialist concepts of human beings and a turning to considering humans as historically, socially and linguistically constructed. As indicated here, memory theorists writing from a 'discourse-analytical' approach have sought to reveal the place of discourse in the construction of memory and hence in what we term experience, consciousness and subjectivity. Feminist critical practice based on this view, such as that of Crawford et al., has revealed the shifting nature of the self, the centrality

⁷⁶ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, selected and translated by Annette Lavers, London, Vintage, 1993 (1975), p. 117.

⁷⁷ Weedon, p. 98.

⁷⁸ Fentress & Wickham, pp. 25-26.

⁷⁹ Jane Flax, *Thinking fragments: psychoanalysis, feminism, and postmodernism in the contemporary West*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 188.

of the search for intelligibility and the way in which individuals both participate in and resist the process of hegemonic construction. Flax concludes that it is not the intention of poststructuralists to counterpose an alternative philosophy that would more adequately solve the problem of truth or subjectivity but rather to 'persuade us not to ask the old questions any more, to change the subjects of the conversation completely'.⁸⁰ Similarly, Weedon writes that poststructuralist feminism, while committed to 'the principles of difference and deferral, never fixes meaning once and for all. For poststructuralists, femininity and masculinity are constantly in process and subjectivity, which most discourses seek to fix, is constantly subject to dispersal.'⁸¹

For Weedon, as for other poststructuralist feminists such as Bronwyn Davies and de Lauretis, the nature of femininity and masculinity 'is one of the key sites of discursive struggle for the individual'.⁸² Institutions, especially schools, play a major part in this struggle and act as sites of discourse seeking to socialise the child and they function by appealing to what is 'natural' or 'normal'. In schools it is the authority figure who guarantees 'the truth of an utterance' often through the authority of God, science and common sense.⁸³ In such settings, according to Weedon, discourses take both written and oral forms in everyday life and 'inhere' in the physical layout of the institution.⁸⁴ De Lauretis argues that feminist critical writings challenge the authority of such discourses through a 're-reading against the grain of the "master works" of Western culture and textual construction . . . of discursive spaces in which not of Woman but women are represented and addressed as subject, possessed of both a specificity (gender) and a history'.⁸⁵

80 *ibid.* p. 193.

81 Weedon, p. 99.

82 *ibid.* p. 98.

83 *ibid.*

84 *ibid.* pp. 111-112.

85 Teresa de Lauretis, 'Feminist studies/critical studies', p. 10.

The notion of 're-reading against the grain' is central within this thesis. Already discussed, one aim is to disrupt - through centralising the experiences of everyday life - the writing of school histories purely from the position of ideology. Yet moving away from ideology does not mean abandoning interest in it. As Monique Wittig argues, the term ideology may be considered to designate the discourses of the dominating group⁸⁶ and it would be fallacious to suppose that a movement towards experience leads to a discarding of dominant discourses. Rather, it is the experience of everyday life which is the site of the operation of ideology (master discourse).⁸⁷ Weedon, drawing on the work of Althusser and Lacan, expresses it in the following way.

In taking on a subject position, the individual assumes that she is the author of the ideology or discourse which she is speaking. She speaks or thinks as if she were in control of meaning. She 'imagines' that she is indeed the type of subject which humanism proposes - rational, unified, the source rather than the effect of language. It is the imaginary quality of the individual's identification with a subject position which gives it so much psychological and emotional force.⁸⁸

In contrast, for feminist poststructuralists, individuals are not unified subjects who are the authors of ideology, rather 'it is language in the form of conflicting discourses which constituted us as conscious thinking subjects and enables us to give meaning to the world and to act to transform it'.⁸⁹ The work of feminist poststructuralists involves analysing 'the intricate network of discourses, the sites where they are articulated and the institutionally legitimised forms of knowledge to which they look for their justification'.⁹⁰ This is the central work of this

⁸⁶ *ibid.* p. 6.

⁸⁷ See Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, who defines ideology within the ego as 'master (*m'être*) discourse whose goal is certainty and closure: "to be me." '. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, 'The sexual masquerade: a Lacanian theory of sexual difference', in Ellie Ragland-Sullivan & Mark Bracher (eds), *Lacan and the subject of language*, New York, Routledge, 1991, p. 71.

⁸⁸ Weedon, p. 31.

⁸⁹ *ibid.* p. 32.

⁹⁰ *ibid.* p. 126.

thesis. That is, to explore the network of discourses which relate to and are expressed at Kerever Park, to identify the source of their legitimization, to locate the school as a place of articulation, and finally, to analyse the memories of those involved as a site of the struggle for the construction of subjectivity through these discourses.

Poststructuralism and History

Poststructuralism has impacted on all disciplines, including history. Flax argues that, by questioning the 'value of unity, homogeneity, totality, closure, and identity',⁹¹ the assumption that there is some pregiven goal towards which we are steadily moving, and 'the teleological view of history implicit in such claims', poststructuralism leads to the death of history as we have known it.⁹² Such thinking has given rise to debate within the discipline.

Two books written in the first half of the 1990s, represent current debate about the status of history. In *Re-Thinking History*, Keith Jenkins, writing from a poststructuralist perspective, argues that history is a 'shifting discourse' in which there are no facts, only interpretations which are 'epistemologically, methodologically, ideologically and practically positioned'.⁹³ In contrast, representing what may be termed traditional or empiricist history, Keith Windschuttle in *The Killing of History* has refuted poststructuralism, arguing for what he considers history to have always been: 'inductive argument constructed out of evidence',⁹⁴ in which the paramount and obtainable goal is the 'truth' about the past. Readers of these two books might be tempted to believe that there is only one yes-or-no answer to the debate, rather than recognising that historians on either side may be differently positioned according to the

⁹¹ Flax, p. 33.

⁹² *ibid.* p. 189.

⁹³ Keith Jenkins, *Re-thinking history*, London, Routledge, 1991, p. 26.

⁹⁴ Keith Windschuttle, *The killing of history*, Sydney, Macleay Press, 1994, p. 219.

topics they address and their individual concerns. However, the books are helpful in mapping out the territory of each position.

Jenkins, in keeping with the poststructuralist view and drawing in particular on the writings of cultural theorists Barthes and Hayden White, argues the following points:

1. All history is fiction: there are no facts, only interpretations arising from a particular discourse (position).
2. History (knowledge) is not cumulative: as there is a multiplicity of discourses, so there is a multiplicity of histories (interpretations of the past). Some become dominant, others marginalised, according to the basis of power.
3. Historians cannot be detached: they take their own ideological and cultural positions to the writing of history, just as the reader takes his/her own filter, so that all histories have ambiguities and different meanings for all.

Poststructuralist claims that all historians are positioned are refuted by Windschuttle. Drawing on G.R. Elton, he argues that historians come not with a position but with an 'issue' which needs addressing and, while they are selective of evidence in order to argue their case, they do not construct their evidence, rather they discover it. Evidence takes the form of documents that remain from the past, with the biggest source consisting of the working records of institutions. These documents, he argues, maintain 'an objectivity of their own, as they were not constructed for the benefit of future historians but for contemporary consumption and are thus not tainted by any prescient selectivity . . . [the documents] can then be tested, corroborated or challenged by others'.⁹⁵ Windschuttle's explanation of the historical process reveals some important limitations associated with the empiricist view. First, it generally limits evidence to written documents taken mainly from public

⁹⁵ *ibid.* p. 221.

records. Certainly, not all historians writing from an empiricist perspective rely only on written documents. Feminist researchers and oral historians have contributed much to a movement away from this reliance towards what may be termed 'life history'. Yet there is still a predominance of histories, including school histories, which are heavily dependent on such documents, with data coming from interviews being used either anecdotally or as support for a focus on the public face of the school. This heavy orientation of evidence selected from institutional documents leads towards a focus on 'public' life, with an emphasis on events, rather than a focus on 'private experience', with an emphasis on meaning. Again, feminist historians challenge this focus on 'public' life. Second, Windschuttle fails to recognise that all documents are written with an audience in mind and, in respect of those associated with institutions, usually reflect the discourses of the dominant as they are usually the ones in the position to produce them. An inherent assumption in Windschuttle's argument, drawing strength from the scientific origins of empiricism, is that documents remaining from the past are somehow 'untainted and pure'. Finally, Windschuttle's emphasis on the need for corroboration of evidence does not allow for complexity and multiplicity of meaning. In particular, it denies, in the name of 'reliability', the diversity of meaning for individuals about a common experience.

Investment in the priority of 'public' history is heavily informed by post-Enlightenment philosophical and socio-political discourse in which the 'universal human being' became associated with the 'middle or upper class educated male'.⁹⁶ This discourse has resulted in a social order constructed along gendered lines, pairing the terms 'male' and 'female' and analysing them hierarchically, that is, with one of the terms being seen as inferior and subordinate to the other.⁹⁷ In both conceptual and

⁹⁶ A. Hamilton, Eurocentricism and feminist thought, unpublished paper, Macquarie University, Sydney, 1992.

⁹⁷ Moira Gatens, *Feminism and philosophy: perspectives on difference and inequality*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1991, p. 5.

actual terms, 'male' and 'female' were thought to embody the mutually exclusive characteristics that we now call 'sex-typed'. Woman's body, and particularly her sexual and reproductive functions, provided the grounds for assigning her qualities deemed to be naturally associated with child rearing and the private sphere - 'corporality, passion, emotion and domesticity'.⁹⁸ On the other hand, the essence of man's nature, his rationality, was constructed as 'self-contained' which gave him 'certain politico-economic rights'⁹⁹ in cultural institutions such as the law, politics, economics, education. It gave him the right and responsibility to conduct affairs in the public arena dominated by these institutions.

The writing of much history, including educational history, reflects this binary, hierarchical split, with the bulk of investigation focusing on the public world. For example, in *Learning to Lead*, a history of Australian independent schools, Geoffrey Sherington, Robert Petersen and Ian Brice note that it is written 'not from documents showing how the schools conduct themselves in action, but from publications showing how the schools represent themselves'.¹⁰⁰ The authors, after charting the public face of the schools, arrive at a conclusion also based in the realm of public life, that the current economic plight of Australia may in part be traced to the failure of independent schools to produce leaders who are able to develop Australia to a satisfactory level of economic competitiveness.¹⁰¹ Reference is given to independent girls' schools by contrasting similarities and differences between these and comparable boys' schools, as well as the difficulty girls' schools had in gaining access to independent schools associations dominated by male representatives. In doing so, the girls' schools are portrayed as a 'reflection' of the male schools, lacking a reality of their own. One further problem associated with charting this public face is that it could be assumed that both the male and female recipients of

⁹⁸ *ibid.* p. 4.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Geoffrey Sherington, Robert Petersen, & Ian Brice, *Learning to lead: a history of girls' and boys' corporate secondary schools in Australia*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1987, p. ix.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* p. 157.

this education were passive partakers. Certainly, presentation of the history as being 'how the schools represent themselves' assumes that we are looking here at a history of dominant discourses in corporate schools, and the conclusion the authors arrive at leaves little room for notions of resistance or individual construction of meaning. Finally, such an approach over-determines the status of school according to gender. There is an inherent assumption here that schools which are single sexed are shaped only by gender and that individuals within each school are essentialised by being considered as male or female.

In contrast to this approach, Marjorie Theobald and Alison Prentice, editors of the book, *Women Who Taught*, a history of women and teaching, offer a perspective which moves beyond determinism in which women in education are seen as passive recipients of a dominant culture, towards a history in which they are viewed as actively pushing at the boundaries. Theobald provides a timely warning to educational historians: 'Those who enter the schools of the past with their own set of perceptions should tread warily, since the individual outcomes of such an education varied greatly.'¹⁰² What Theobald and her co-writers do not adequately address, however, is the process which allowed for this variation.

A way in to exploring the processes of construction of consciousness is by way of analysis of the construction of text.¹⁰³ One form of analysis, arising out of the poststructuralist paradigm, has come to be known as a 'deconstructive' approach. This involves exploring how the text has been constructed, and hence being 'attentive to suppressed tensions or conflicts within the text, and suspicious of all "natural" categories, essentialist oppositions, and representational claims'.¹⁰⁴ It also involves, as Weedon suggests, exploring the basis on which discourse is given authority.

¹⁰² Marjorie R. Theobald & Alison Prentice, *Women who taught: perspectives on the history of women and teaching*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1991, pp. 82-83.

¹⁰³ In referring to text, I mean any form of verbal output - written or oral.

¹⁰⁴ Flax, p. 37.

Natural categories and essentialist oppositions are located in binary thinking, so that much of the work of poststructuralism is about deconstructing the 'binarisms through which we structure our knowledge of ourselves and the social world'.¹⁰⁵ Davies concludes that it is 'by making hegemonic sets of assumptions visible, the nature of what we take to be factual or real is profoundly shifted'.¹⁰⁶

Recent research by Theobald, as well as research by Alison Mackinnon, indicates the contribution of deconstructive readings to exploring the 'lived experience' of women in educational settings. Their work opens out notions of 'woman' and 'teacher', identifying the construction of subjectivities associated with these terms. Mackinnon's research into the experience of university women in the early part of this century employs literary and oral sources to illuminate changes in the women's subjectivities during the period, exploring in particular the impact of two major sets of discourses of the time. On one hand, the university women could position themselves within the prevailing intellectual climate as 'rational intellectual beings'. On the other hand, they could also position themselves in a set of discursive practices which centred on their role as 'women'. These positions offered choice to women as well as tension and limitation.¹⁰⁷ The tension and limitation here is contained in the binaries located within these discourses. 'Rational intellectual beings' are associated with being male, while being 'woman' is associated with 'irrational and non-intellectual'. In a similar manner, Theobald offers us insight into the lived experience of women teachers in the nineteenth century who found the task of managing the existential dilemma of conflicting discourses even more precarious, especially when they were

¹⁰⁵ Davies, p. 8. Davies includes in this section an interesting list of binary metaphors associated with male/female.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.* p. 20.

¹⁰⁷ Alison Mackinnon, ' "Nowhere to plant the sole of the foot?" : Women, university education and subjectivity in the early twentieth century', in Lyn Yates (ed.), *Feminism and education*, Melbourne Studies in Education, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1993, p. 29. Mackinnon further develops this research in her book, *Love and freedom: professional women and the reshaping of personal life*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

deployed against them at the hands of state bureaucrats. She writes of one such teacher who ultimately is defeated by conflicting positions.

But Eliza-as-victim will no longer do, nor will any other essential Eliza. Her unhappy death illuminates, if nothing else, a woman caught in the quicksands of conflicting subjectivities - wife, daughter, sister, and servant of the state. The instability of the category 'woman' was indeed at the centre of Eliza's existential nightmare, as it was for all women teachers who tried to be equally present with men in the public sphere.¹⁰⁸

In deconstructive readings, notions of personal change cannot be separated from political change in that any construction of subjectivity is located in the discourses available at the time. Analysis of experience allows for insight into the construction of consciousness, including politicisation and the process of subjective transformation.

Poststructuralism moves back from debating the 'end product' of a history and the validity of the case presented to challenging among other things the 'validity' of the subject itself, moving beyond an assumption that there is a 'ready made autonomous subject' such as 'women', 'workers', or any other group.¹⁰⁹ Questioning of unity is applied to the individual who is not regarded as 'a rational autonomous unit producing meanings and values, but rather as being constituted in the ebb and flow of conflicting meanings generated by various discourses'.¹¹⁰ The challenging of essentialism in poststructuralist theory may equally be applied to schools. Similarly, I suggest that there is not an essential school, rather, it exists in the ebb and flow of meanings associated with various individuals, or groups of individuals, and their shifting constructions of subjectivity.

¹⁰⁸ Marjorie R. Theobald, 'Writing the lives of women teachers: problems and possibilities', in Yates, p. 39.

¹⁰⁹ M. Valverde, 'Poststructuralist gender historians: are we those names?', *Labour/Le Travail*, vol. 25, 1990, p. 228.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

The application of poststructuralist theory to feminist projects has not been without its critics. For example, Somer Brodribb considers such usage to be 'an identification with the (white) male text'¹¹¹ and hence not 'a knowledge that considers female experience'.¹¹² At a time when women's stories are finally being told, such analysis may threaten the validation of women's experience. Theobald discusses this dilemma by referring to Denise Riley's 'marriage of postmodernism and feminism'.

Riley's marriage of postmodernism and feminism need not in itself discomfort the biographer/historian: indeed the notion of 'instability' in the category of woman places it firmly within the brief of the historian. Yet something is amiss between feminist historians and postmodernists. When text and discourse are presented as the primary sites of struggle, when history becomes simply another fiction to be deconstructed, historians shift uneasily in their seats.¹¹³

Theobald chooses to proceed on the assumption that theory and narrative may inform each other.¹¹⁴ Her poststructuralist explorations of the tensions inherent in the shifting subjectivities of women teachers have given insight into the underlying tensions of their day-to-day lives. Similarly, Mackinnon has argued, and demonstrated in her work, that the alignment of feminism and poststructuralism provides insight into the complex process of the formation of subjectivities. In particular, it provides insight into how the 'juggling [of] potentially contradictory discourses allows for the possibility of social change as women made choices between the various positions available and qualified dominant notions in keeping with their own needs and desires'.¹¹⁵

I, too, proceed on the belief that theory and narrative may inform each other - that narrative deepens and extends understanding of theory and,

¹¹¹ Somer Brodribb, *Nothing matters: feminist critique of postmodernism*, 2nd ed., Melbourne, Spinifex, 1993, p. xxiv.

¹¹² *ibid.* p. xxiii.

¹¹³ Theobald, 'Writing the lives of women teachers', p. 39.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.* p. 40.

¹¹⁵ Mackinnon, *Love and freedom*, p. 133.

in turn, theory provides a deeper reading of narrative. In undertaking this history of Kerever Park, incorporating the experiences of those involved has been central. Interviews were conducted with staff and ex-students and in writing up these experiences I have chosen to use a case study approach in order to allow the voices of those involved to emerge, albeit through the filter of my own consciousness. In doing so, I have also tried to use the words of the individuals as much as possible. Yet I have also adopted a position which avoids viewing these memories as authoritative. Rather, I have chosen to view them as constructions which allow insight into the work of discursive practices and into how those involved have sought to construct themselves in relation to these practices.

It is tempting to argue that a history written from the perspective of 'experience' offers the truth. Such a belief presupposes that experience is authoritative and unchanging. This has been challenged by previously cited research. Considering that experience offers the truth also assumes that I am an unpositioned author. As already indicated, I write from a particular social class and cultural tradition (namely an academic and Catholic tradition). I also write from a feminist and poststructuralist perspective. Gordon suggests that there are two academic and political impulses in women's history. One is empiricism in which women historians claim to tell the truth about what has heretofore been disguised or distorted. Another pole is to reject the possibility of objectivity and to accept that history is story telling in which we create new myths to serve our aspirations. Gordon argues for an in-between position which does not imply resolution.¹¹⁶

It is wrong to conclude, as some have, that because there may be no objective truth possible, there are not objective lies. There may be no objective canons of historiography, but there are degrees of accuracy;

¹¹⁶ Gordon, p. 22.

there are better and worse pieces of history. The challenge is to maintain this tension between accuracy and mythic power.¹¹⁷

Informed by a discursive-analytic approach to memory, I suggest that in order to attain a greater degree of accuracy in the writing of school history there is a need to consider the experience of those involved as contextualised and variable productions which do pragmatic and rhetorical work.¹¹⁸ 'Contextualised' in that it represents social life already constituted,¹¹⁹ with this social life being constructed in the context of Kerever Park and in the context of social life now. 'Variable' in that it represents the shifting nature of subjectivity as the person aligns herself/himself with various discourses including ones which stand in tension with each other. 'Pragmatic' and 'rhetorical' in that there is a need to consider why a particular account of experience is being offered. In particular, to examine ways in which the past is 're-examined, amended, and given new meaning' in the light of present subjectivity.¹²⁰ In incorporating experience into the histories of schools, I do not suggest that study of ideology be left behind. Rather, there is a need to explore the construction of that social world according to the dominant discourses and to consider how individuals positioned themselves in relation to these discourses, as well as to competing discourses, and found individual meaning in relationship to them.

Contributions from Oral History and Hermeneutics

While poststructuralist theory has informed much of the work of this thesis, the writing of a number of oral historians who work outside this paradigm was also informative as well as the hermeneutic work of Paul Ricoeur. Interviews with those associated with the school have been central in achieving the aims of this thesis. At the beginning of each of

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Middleton & Edwards, 'Conversational remembering', p. 37.

¹¹⁹ Shotter, p. 123.

¹²⁰ Melucci, p. 12.

the fifteen interviews conducted, I asked one question which allowed the person to tell their story in their own way. (See Appendix I for general methodology.)

We are here to talk about being at school/being a religious at Kerever Park; so how would you like to start in telling me about that experience?

In order to encourage participants to summarise their experience, at the end of the interview I asked them the following question:

What words would you use to summarise your experience of Kerever Park?

Such an approach can be termed a 'life history' approach.¹²¹ Ian Watson states that this method involves researchers collecting 'detailed autobiographies of individuals, often in interviews lasting several hours'.¹²²

Unlike survey approaches, the life history method used open-ended techniques of questioning, with minimal direction from the interviewer, and with a preference for long, self-reflective accounts from the interviewee. The kind of 'data' which emerged from such interviews was sometimes termed 'thick description', meaning that it was rich in detail about the concrete experiences of everyday life . . . The defining element to the method remains its concern with understanding an individual's life history as an entry point into understanding society as a whole.¹²³

Although such an approach is termed life history, it does not necessitate, according to Daniel Bertaux, a coverage of the entire life-span and all its aspects.¹²⁴ Rather, it can be related to specific aspects of life. The key is the

¹²¹ Daniel Bertaux, 'Introduction', in Daniel Bertaux (ed.), *Biography and society: the life-history approach in the social sciences*, Beverly Hills, Sage, 1981, p. 7.

¹²² Ian Watson, 'Class memory: an alternative approach to class identity', unpublished paper presented at the National Conference for the Study of Labour History, Newcastle (NSW), June 24-27, 1993, p. 3.

¹²³ *ibid.*

¹²⁴ Bertaux, p. 8.

methodology of an open-ended, reflective interview. Additionally, as recent research into memory has revealed, there is less 'distance' between the past/present/future within memory than has previously been acknowledged. As Melucci suggests: 'Whenever we confront the possible - as in planning for the future - when we make a decision that anticipates the action to come, the past is re-examined, amended, and given a new meaning.'¹²⁵ He concludes that we 'thus live all patterns of time simultaneously: the recurring circle of memory and project'.¹²⁶ Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame makes a similar claim.

To tell one's life story is not only to talk or to remember; it is an act, an *encounter* with reality. If this encounter seems to limit itself to an account of the past, it is orientated in fact by the present, in two ways: first it reconstructs the meaning of the past from the present points of view; second, and more deeply, it gives meaning to the past *in order* to give meaning to the present, to the present life of the person. And this last meaning cannot be the same for all social groups.¹²⁷

Bertaux-Wiame also argues that, in contrast to attempting to 'quantify phenomena' which operate at the level of 'superficial description', life histories allow the historian to identify and explore the underlying 'patterns of sociostructural relations'.¹²⁸

Yet in spite of this possibility of life-histories allowing insight into the workings of particular social orders, I also found in my analysis of the interviews that full appropriation of meaning was elusive. Hans-Georg Gadamer has expressed this elusiveness in a manner I find helpful.

Everything that is experienced is experienced by oneself, and it is part of its meaning that it belongs to the unity of this self and thus contains an inalienable and irreplaceable relation to the whole of

¹²⁵ Melucci, p. 12.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

¹²⁷ Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame, 'The life history approach to the study of internal migration', in Bertaux, *Biography and society*, p. 258.

¹²⁸ Cited in Watson, p. 5.

this one life. Thus its being is not exhausted in what can be said of it and in what can be grasped as its meaning. The autobiographical or biographical reflection, in which its meaning is determined, remains fused with the whole movement of life and constantly accompanies it.¹²⁹

Such a view is in keeping with poststructuralist arguments that absolute knowledge does not exist.

Valerie Raleigh Yow has outlined specifically some of the practical advantages of oral history in which in-depth interviews are used.

1. It is interactive in that the 'source' of the information can reflect upon the content and offer interpretation as well as facts.
2. It allows for the point of view of non-elite people who have no access to the writing of public documents.
3. Where there are documents, it can be used to understand what documents are important and why.
4. It allows for exploration of daily life with its informal and unwritten laws, patterns and ramification of personal relations, and the dimensions of life that characterised being part of a group and living in a community.
5. It reveals the images and symbols that people use, as well as psychological reality, which form the basis for ideals and interpretations of experience which in turn influence behaviour.
6. It allows for exploration of the way in which the individual sees her/his own history, as well as that of the group.
7. It provides a complex view of experience, expressed in Geertz's terms as 'thick description'.¹³⁰

The writings of Yow and Bertaux-Wiame are helpful in supporting the aims of this thesis, that is, a desire to explore experience, to locate the

¹²⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and method: multi-disciplinary studies in the creation of meaning*, 2nd ed., translated by William Geln-Doepel, London, Sheed & Ward, 1978 (1975), p. 60.

¹³⁰ Adapted from Valerie R. Yow, *Recording oral history: a practical guide for social scientists*, California, Sage, 1994, pp. 10-24.

meaning it holds for individuals and to analyse it as a site of discursive practices.

Yow suggests that in-depth interviews allow for exploration of the way in which the individual sees his/her own history. Katherine Borland takes up this issue arguing that in the performance of personal narrative, meaning construction occurs on two levels. First, in the interaction between self: the dynamic interaction between the person and the narrated event. Second, in the interaction between the event and the intended audience.¹³¹ Borland's first level refers to what has been previously discussed, that is, the reconstruction of memory which includes the struggle of the person to make sense of their own history. The second level in the performance of personal narratives is what she terms, the 'assumption of the responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence'.¹³² Similarly Watson, drawing on the work of Richard Johnson and Graham Dawson, argues that 'in an oral history interview we do not gaze directly into the past through the eyes of our informant. Rather, we meet a person engaged in a "highly constructed . . . performance" which is the product of "thought, artifice, verbal and literary skills"'.¹³³

The notion of interview as performance is not a new one, for historians and feminist historians in particular have noted the complexity of the process for the women they interview. Mackinnon, in undertaking her work on the stories of early women graduates from the University of Adelaide, turned to warnings of writers, such as Anna Tröger and Dorothy Smith, in approaching the narratives of women. The warnings are located in what Smith called 'in-depth organization of

¹³¹ Katherine Borland, ' "That's not what I said": interpretative conflict in oral narrative research', in Sherna Berger Gluck & Daphne Patai (eds), *Women's words: the feminist practice of oral history*, New York, Routledge, 1991, p. 63.

¹³² *ibid.*

¹³³ Watson, p. 7.

consciousness'¹³⁴ referring to the tendency of women to construct narratives they consider to be 'suitable for public display' and in keeping with their own need to feel satisfied with their life stories.¹³⁵ Mackinnon also noted that highly educated women have an even more highly developed sense of what is appropriate, indeed, 'seemly'.¹³⁶ She found that the women adopted various positions towards their history, including a tendency to de-value their own stories: 'But that's not history . . . that's gossip!'¹³⁷ She also found women tending to produce what was 'seemly', but alongside such constructions she also found '*women tilting at the boundaries of the possible*' with multiple voices and differences of tone¹³⁸ breaking open, to some degree, their constructions and allowing insight into tensions within their experiences. The interviews I conducted for this research also reflect Mackinnon's description of 'women tilting at the boundaries'.

In a number of the interviews I conducted with ex-students, participants often stopped within their narratives to comment that what they were talking about was probably not really important. In these cases I assured them that there was relevance in their exploring their story in whatever way they wished. In contrast to this 'devaluing' by ex-students, it was more likely to be the religious, although not all, who started out with tight narratives which seemed designed to present a unified story. For example, one religious began her narrative by describing her time at Kerever Park as 'a little golden period' with some minor difficulties, but as the interview progressed she began to bring in aspects of the experience which sat in tension with this earlier description.¹³⁹ In three cases in the

¹³⁴ Cited in Alison Mackinnon, 'Collective biography: reading early university women from their own texts', in Susan Magarey (ed.), *Writing lives: feminist biography and autobiography*, Adelaide, Australian Feminist Studies Publication, 1992, p. 97.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

¹³⁷ *ibid.* p. 96.

¹³⁸ *ibid.* p. 97.

¹³⁹ C.K. 18 March 1996. Interview one. Catherine is a pseudonym, as are the initials, because all religious asked to be anonymous.

interviews with the religious, crucial stories arose after I had finished taping and was about to leave. In two cases, those involved allowed me to tape the stories, although one made it conditional that I leave out certain aspects while the other allowed me to use the story without any reservation. In the third case, the religious did not want me to include the story at all and would not allow me to tape it. In no cases with ex-students did this kind of unravelling of a tight construction occur. The tight constructions of the religious, in contrast to the less restricted, often rambling explorations of the ex-students, bear witness to the positioning of the women I interviewed - the ex-students who may be considered as the recipients of the education they received at Kerever Park and the religious who may view themselves as being held responsible for what happened there. This positioning was also reflected in the discourses each group drew upon to give meaning to their past experience. The religious tended to draw upon those associated with Catholicism, while the ex-students tended to draw upon those of psychology and the modernist notion of progress as they sought to find meaning in their early experiences - meanings which were in keeping with their present subjectivities.

Borland's second level of narrative performance, that is, the interaction between the event and the intended audience, also raises the issue of the relationship between the participant and the interviewer and hence the embedded issue of power relations and its effect upon the narrative. In my relationship with ex-students, I believe there was a high degree of equality. I was an ex-student who made it clear that I accepted their story, however it went. It was not obvious to me that being 'an academic' came into play in the relationship, but perhaps it did and was well hidden. The ex-students were, in varying degrees, open about their experiences and in one particular case revealed what may be considered as some very personal material. She commented at times that it must be interesting to have the opportunity to see into people's private stories, reflecting that

what she was revealing was indeed highly sensitive material. There is a dilemma in such a situation.

In-depth interviews require a high degree of interpersonal skills such as those associated with basic counselling. These include establishing rapport, listening reflectively, using cues to encourage telling the story, summarising, using basic empathy, and employing questions to clarify meaning.¹⁴⁰ Such skills encourage the participant, as Katherine Anderson, Susan Armitage, Dana Jack and Judith Wittner suggest, to go 'behind the veil of outwardly conforming activity, to explore what a particular behaviour means and reciprocally to understand how the behaviour of others affects consciousness and activity'.¹⁴¹ These writers argue that traditional historical sources 'tell us more about what happened and how it happened than how people felt about it and what it meant to them'.¹⁴² In contrast, they urge oral historians to ask questions about feelings, attitudes, values and meanings.¹⁴³ Outside coercion, a degree of trust is needed for anyone to share their story. Judith Stacey warns that, while empathy may be used to encourage a person to tell her story, a danger associated with being a 'good confidante' is that the narrator will be seduced into 'telling all', thereby over-disclosing and subsequently being embarrassed. Another danger is that they will reveal the private lives of others.¹⁴⁴ The researcher hence walks a fine line between necessary disclosure and over-disclosure. In some interviews, I was aware that there was a high degree of self-disclosure. In one interview with a religious, she acknowledged that my questioning had led her to disclose more than she had intended. The procedure of sending the tapes back to participants in the form of transcripts was one way in which I

¹⁴⁰ Gerard Egan, *The skilled helper*, 5th ed., Belmont (California), Brooks Cole, 1994.

¹⁴¹ Katherine Anderson, Susan Armitage, Dana Jack & Judith Wittner, 'Beginning where we are: feminist methodology in oral history', in Joyce Neilsen (ed.), *Feminist research methods: exemplary readings in the social sciences*, Boulder (Colorado), Westview Press, 1990, p. 97.

¹⁴² *ibid.* p. 98.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Cited in Yow, p. 108.

attempted to deal with this problem. A difficulty associated with this process was that in some cases the interview became much more tightly scripted and unified. One ex-student went through and made hundreds of small changes, although she was the only ex-student who edited her interview so rigorously. However, the religious were more thorough and the majority were careful to correct any spelling mistakes and cases of colloquial expression so that their transcripts ended up looking more like written documents than oral texts. In spite of this outcome in some cases, the advantage of returning the transcript to the participant was that it gave the participant time to decide if they were happy to include what they had said in a public document. In the case of the religious who felt that the interview had led to a higher degree of disclosure than she felt comfortable with, her way of dealing with it was to ask me to send her a copy of any writing which included reference to her material. I did this and we negotiated a final version. Additionally, as a way of providing a form of protection for those interviewed, I decided to use pseudonyms for all participants (except in the case of the two non-religious ancillary staff). The religious all asked to remain anonymous, while this was not requested by ex-students or the ancillary staff. In discussions with ex-students, I indicated that I was happy to use their names if they felt strongly about it but otherwise I would use a pseudonym. The final outcome is that I have used pseudonyms for the ex-students and religious. As I did not apply a case study approach to the interview from the ancillary staff, who were a couple who undertook domestic and farming duties, I did not use a pseudonym in their case.

My relationship with the religious was different from that with the ex-students. It might be speculated that, as a number of the religious had been teachers while I was at the school, even the fact that they were religious, might have led me to feel a loss of power in the interview. This was not the case. I have worked in Catholic educational settings for over twenty years with priests and nuns as my colleagues. For me, 'religious' are colleagues in the work of education, even if they are past teachers

from my own schooling. However, I cannot say that this was the same for the religious. I suspect that there was a degree of tension for some of them in having an ex-student come back as an academic to 'research' the school. They may have perceived a degree of accountability in this undertaking. At the end of the interview, I asked them what it was like to share in the research. None explored this aspect of the research process and I did not push them to do so - perhaps mistakenly. Talking about it might also have clarified my view expressed above - that it had some tension for them. Yet I did find the religious to be remarkably candid about their experiences and about their perceptions of the school - for all this included some critical comment.

In viewing the narrative as a construction of the experience, it was necessary to find ways of analysing the interviews. As already discussed, discursive models are helpful in providing a theoretical basis for techniques for exploring a person's construction of the social world. I also found the work of Ricoeur and that of Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet¹⁴⁵ helpful in understanding the narratives of those interviewed.

The hermeneutic work of Ricoeur is helpful in understanding how metaphor works in describing experience and negotiating meaning. Ricoeur defines metaphoric reference as a 'split reference', 'a kind of mistake . . . taking one thing for another by a sort of calculated error'.¹⁴⁶ Through this process of combining symbols metaphorically, experience is redescribed in order to make sense of it. In fact, Ricoeur basically argues that all language is metaphor, in that language only has meaning through relating a previous meaning to a new situation. Human speech is, therefore, the process of the transfer of meaning from one context to

¹⁴⁵ Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet, 'Narrative structures, social models, and symbolic representation in the life story', in Gluck & Patai, pp. 77-92.

¹⁴⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *The rule of metaphor: multidisciplinary studies of the creation of meaning and language*, translated by Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin & John Costello, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978 (1975), p. 21.

another.¹⁴⁷ A simple example of a metaphor was employed by an ex-student who described Kerever Park as a 'moulding haven'.¹⁴⁸ In this example, the idea of the school as a 'haven' is cancelled out by the idea of it as 'moulding', hence the description of it as a 'moulding haven' becomes a 'split reference' and takes on a metaphoric character. The notion of the school as 'haven' persists but, when it is placed beside 'moulding', the idea of the school solely as a refuge breaks down. The combining of the two words suggests a tension between the two ways of describing it, and the school cannot be thought of entirely as 'refuge' or entirely as 'an instrument of shaping'. The two words rub up against each other, describing what the experience was like and yet not like. In focusing on this metaphor, it is possible to glimpse how this person was engaged in the process of redescribing reality.

A more complicated example comes from the narrative of one of the religious, Mary D. In my first interview with Mary, she referred to a story of being in England, well after her time at Kerever Park, and coming upon a field of bluebells. The experience of finding a field of bluebells was significant for Mary. As an infant, she and her parents lived in England before coming to Australia. In later years, her mother often told her about their cottage in England being opposite a field which in spring was covered with these flowers. On a study trip to England, after becoming a religious and after her time at Kerever Park, Mary found her field of bluebells. She also found an unexploded grenade in it which she felt impelled to report to the bus driver.¹⁴⁹ At first, this story seemed to have nothing to do with being at Kerever Park and I found myself 'switching off' from what seemed to me to be a digression. Yet, later, when I examined the interview as a whole, looking at the patterns contained within it, I realised that this seemingly meaningless digression was in fact

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.* pp. 101-133.

¹⁴⁸ Carolyn Lyons (McAlary), *Kerever Park: past pupils remember...*, flier put out to celebrate fifty years, Sydney, Rose Bay archives, 1994.

¹⁴⁹ M.D. 7 September 1995. Interview one.

extremely helpful in understanding the complexity of the experience for Mary and the meaning it held for her. In the experiences Mary shared from her time at the school, there was a pattern of her responding spontaneously, taking initiatives and being reprimanded for this behaviour. In tension with her spontaneity was a need to obey those in authority: 'I had to tell the bus driver, they were reporting any unexploded grenades.' Hence Mary's story, seemingly irrelevant at first, took on a metaphoric quality, as she overlayed her experience of Kerever Park with this later experience.

I am not alone in the recognition of the value of metaphor in understanding oral narrative. Historians drawing on research into memory have come to the recognition that what may in the past have been considered to be 'errors' in memory are in fact a window into the meaning of the experience. An excellent example was provided by Lucy Taksa in her research into the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19 in which informants 'mistakenly' refer to the influenza pandemic as 'Bubonic Plague'. Taksa points out that, when an informant's portrayal of the past 'conflicts with present historical knowledge, it may indicate that this remembering constitutes a politically shaped interpretation and representation of lived experience, rather than an unconscious error'.¹⁵⁰ In this case, the 'Bubonic Plague' metaphor reflected not only the anxiety surrounding the disease but also the social tensions surrounding the post-war period. In keeping with Taksa, I also found an understanding of the function of metaphor helpful in finding meaning in various sections of narratives and, in particular, in gaining insight into tensions which surrounded that experience for the participant.

Chanfrault-Duchet's model of narrative analysis was also helpful in identifying meaning within narratives, in particular how the person

¹⁵⁰ Lucy Taksa, 'The masked disease: oral history, memory and the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19', in Kate Darian-Smith & Paula Hamilton (eds), *Memory and history in twentieth-century Australia*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 77-91.

positions herself in relation to the hegemonic social model within the school. Chanfrault-Duchet argues that facts and events take their meaning from the narrative structure in which they are embedded. Exploring these facts and events within the narrative structure makes it possible to locate not only the relation between self and the social sphere but, especially, women's conditions as they are shaped by the society in which they live and how they construct meaning for this experience.¹⁵¹ Her form of research involves gathering 'life stories' and analysing them for the socio-symbolic contents they bring into play. She defines the life story through two features: the 'specifically narrative and "literary" nature of the object produced in a dialogue' and 'the social nature of the self dramatized in the narrative'.¹⁵² In considering the 'narrative dimension' she argues that the life story accounts for the participant's life experience until the moment of the interview. This includes, she argues, 'not only the temporal and causal organization of facts and events considered significant, but also the value judgements that make sense of this particular life experience'.¹⁵³

The second feature of Chanfrault-Duchet's definition of life story is that it deals not only with the 'relation between self and the social sphere, but also . . . with woman's condition and with the collective representations of woman as they have been shaped by the society with which the woman being interviewed must deal'.¹⁵⁴ In considering the narratives of those interviewed for this research, it is possible to gain insight into the way in which the women interviewed have been shaped by gendered discourses and also how they have sought to deal with the construction of their own subjectivity in relation to those discourses.

¹⁵¹ Chanfrault-Duchet, p. 78.

¹⁵² *ibid.* p. 77.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.* p. 78.

Chanfrault-Duchet argues against a deconstructive approach to exploring narratives on the basis that it misses, what F. Ferrarotti calls, the 'heuristic potential' of the life story approach.¹⁵⁵ While I found a deconstructive approach helpful in locating embedded discourses within written documents and narratives, I agree with Chanfrault-Duchet in that I too found that applying only the deconstructive model to the narratives led to a failure to see meanings which I would otherwise have missed. In understanding the narratives of those interviewed, I found her method of looking at the narrative as a whole extremely helpful.

Although Chanfrault-Duchet employs four analytical devices within her model, it is the first three which were helpful in identifying how each person positioned herself in relation to the hegemonic social model. First, Chanfrault-Duchet identifies the key phrases of the narrative which she refers to as formal markers which define the 'relation between the self and the social sphere'.¹⁵⁶ These markers, in her terms, express 'the harmony, the indifference, the ambiguity, the conflict, and so on, existing between self and society'.¹⁵⁷ An aspect of these markers which I found particularly helpful was the use of the first, second and third person, singular or plural. I found that many participants would move from the use of the first person singular, 'I', to represent their separateness from the group, into the first person plural, 'we', when they spoke together with others with whom they found affinity. Movement into either the third person plural, 'they', or the second person, 'you', seemed to denote their opposition to a particular group. Other markers, similar to Chanfrault-Duchet's markers, included the religious saying: 'It's the way it was then' or 'That's how it was in those days'.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 79.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.* See examples of Chanfrault-Duchet's markers such as 'It was natural', 'I refused.'

The second device used in this model involves looking for key patterns in which the person attempts to express their relation to others, particularly to the dominant social mode. Chanfrault-Duchet writes that in anecdotes 'they picture themselves confronted with a dominant model and always actualising the same pattern of behaviour: identification, acceptance or at least compromises, and so on, on the one hand; defiance, refusal, exclusion, and so on, on the other'.¹⁵⁹ In exploring the narratives from this perspective, I found that participants were not, in contrast to Chanfrault-Duchet's argument, always consistent in positioning themselves. Rather, and in keeping with the poststructuralist paradigm, they often moved from identification to acquiescence, to resistance depending on the particular situation, the meaning they ascribed to it and the perceived outcomes.

The third device involves examination of the narrative models borrowed from literary forms as a way of the person sharing their particular quest for values. These narrative models may be borrowed from oral tradition, written literature, and television series. Chanfrault-Duchet refers to three such models: the epic model in which the person identifies with the values of the community, the romanesque model which expresses 'the quest for authentic values in a degraded world', and the picaresque model in which 'change is confronted through questioning of the dominant social values'.¹⁶⁰ I found this device particularly helpful in understanding the meaning of participants' references to, usually one, significant book which they had read while at Kerever Park. As the school was very isolated, being a boarding school run by a semi-enclosed order, reading books was an important pastime. In the memories of the participants it seemed that often the stories contained within these books reflected how they saw their lives while at Kerever Park and usually revealed their positioning in regards to the dominant social model. For example, Suzanne B., a religious, who remembered being struck by the

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.* p. 80.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.* pp. 80-81.

story of Elizabeth of Hungary who 'was so beautiful . . . had learnt the language of the people . . . and was crushed by the formality of the court'.¹⁶¹ This story seemed to reflect Suzanne's construction of herself as a young religious at Kerever Park who was different because she had not attended a Sacred Heart school, as a school student, and who was the bearer of an educational discourse which differed from those which dominated Kerever Park at the time.

Chanfrault-Duchet's last device in which she sought to identify the 'mythical tales' from oral tradition¹⁶² within the narrative was less helpful. This device is more in keeping with the structuralist approach to interpreting experience through archetypal myths than exploring it from a poststructuralist perspective. Ultimately, my approach has been to explore how each person found meaning for herself through her interpretations of the discourses available to her within the setting.

Writing School Histories - The Australian Scene

In early reflections on Kerever Park, written in the late 1940s and published in the school journal of Rose Bay, the school was described as 'the ideal setting for a happy childhood'¹⁶³ and 'the ante-chamber of Heaven'.¹⁶⁴ These early reflections express certain aspirations which those involved in setting up the school had for it. However, in later histories, related to other aspects of the Society of the Sacred Heart and written by members of the order, these early aspirations have become perceived as the only reality. In her history of the work of the order, Margaret Williams describes Kerever Park as 'a garden paradise'.¹⁶⁵ In Leila Barlow's history of Rose Bay Convent it is referred to as 'an ideal

¹⁶¹ S.B. 25 October 1995. Interview one.

¹⁶² Chanfrault-Duchet, p. 81.

¹⁶³ Author anonymous, 'Kerever Park, Burradoo', *Cor Unum: the chronicle of the convents of the Sacred Heart Australia*, vol. 1, 1945-1946, p. 89.

¹⁶⁴ Author anonymous, 'At home at Kerever Park', *Cor Unum*, vol. 6, 1949-1950, p. 73.

¹⁶⁵ Williams, *Society of the Sacred Heart*, p. 211.

milieu where future pupils of Rose Bay first experienced what St Madeleine Sophie's [the foundress of the Society] education hopes to impart: awareness of being loved, freedom to be oneself and education through a happy collaboration in work and play'.¹⁶⁶ As will be discussed in chapter three, these discourses of childhood were part of what was aspired to in setting up the school but they do not adequately reflect the reported experience of those involved. Indeed, neither of these histories involved interviews with ex-students which might verify such claims. Many school histories reflect a similar function: that of celebration and the building of community rather than of critical reflection on the past. In reviewing school histories written about Australian schools, it is possible to identify a number of salient characteristics. First, the vast majority of histories have been written as celebratory markers. In his recent selected bibliography of school histories, compiler Geoffrey Burkhardt revealed that over 1100 Australian school histories have been written as part of centenary and jubilee celebrations.¹⁶⁷ He notes that many of these histories have been written by centenary committees rather than by historians - it is the larger non-government secondary schools which tend to commission historians.¹⁶⁸ The histories which Burkhardt reviewed ranged from small, eight to ten page booklets to cloth bound books of three to four hundred pages. They generally included a large number of photographic and documentary reproductions and often the history of the school was tied into a history of the local area.¹⁶⁹ While there are school histories which fall outside the centenary and jubilee category, their numbers are much smaller and Burkhardt's list reflects the celebratory intentions behind most Australian school histories.

¹⁶⁶ Leila Barlow, *Living stones: Convent of the Sacred Heart, Rose Bay 1882-1982*, Sydney, Kincoppal-Rose Bay School, 1982, p. 92.

¹⁶⁷ Geoffrey Burkhardt (compiler), *Australian school centenary and jubilee histories: a select bibliography*, Magpie Bibliographies Number 1, Angaston (South Australia), Magpie Books, 1995, p. v.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ For example, Burkhardt notes that a history of Crossmaglen Public School by Alison Fleck includes a study of the history of the local timber industry (p. 22) and also that a history of Hurstville Public School by B. J. Madden and A. C. Gudgeon provides 'a good example of the combination of local and school histories' (p. 329).

Publicly celebrated birthdays are generally not considered to be places to explore in detail the shortcomings of the central figure. One such attempt was undertaken by Gerard Windsor in the late 1970s when he was commissioned to write a centenary history of St Ignatius College. His manuscript was never published.¹⁷⁰ Perhaps in response to this experience, in 1980 he wrote a journal review of a published history of Jesuits in Australia.¹⁷¹ In this article he criticised the author of the history for 'a lack of awareness of the gap that exists between profession and practice, between rhetoric and everyday reality'.¹⁷² His criticism could be equally applied to a number of school histories.

A second characteristic of school histories is an orientation towards the public face of the school. This characteristic is best exemplified by a focus on those in positions of power, especially school principals, as well as a focus on school ideology. Such histories range from those in which the author seems to identify totally with the ideology they define to histories in which the author is able, at times, to bring to bear some critical comment upon this ideology and those in positions of power. For example, the author of a recent history of a Catholic girls' school called Stuartholme, also run by the same order which ran Kerever Park, has offered little critical comment and takes the position of identification with the ideology of the school.¹⁷³ The author, Carolyn Nolan has, according to Philomene Tiernan the Australian Provincial of the Society who wrote the Foreword, aimed to 'focus chiefly on customs and events . . . [which] express underlying values and beliefs'.¹⁷⁴ The resultant history falls into a descriptive mode in which customs and events are merely reported with little attempt to interrogate their meaning. There is no

¹⁷⁰ See Gerard Windsor, *Friends and sometime scholars: a history of St Ignatius College*, unpublished manuscript located in the Australian National Library, Canberra, date not indicated, c. 1979.

¹⁷¹ Gerard Windsor, 'Jesuit myths', *Quadrant*, vol. XXIV, no. 8, 1980, pp. 20-24.

¹⁷² *ibid.* p. 20.

¹⁷³ Carolyn Nolan, *Ribbons, beads and processions: the foundation of Stuartholme*, Brisbane, Stuartholme School, 1995.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.* Foreword.

acknowledgement that the school has reflected the values of a particular social class or that the Society itself, until the mid 1960s, included a hierarchical arrangement with a tiered system of choir nuns who taught and coadjutrix sisters who undertook the domestic work. Additionally, in current times when gender is such a central issue in contemporary thinking, including in the writings of many Catholic feminists,¹⁷⁵ it might be hoped that this history would express some of this critical thought. In contrast, Nolan seems blind to issues of gender and class. For example, at one point she refers to rituals as being 'seen as yet another way of integrating them [the students] with the life of the Church'.¹⁷⁶ In another section she refers uncritically to girls being given a hand painted picture of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in the form of Mater Admirabilis, when they were married.¹⁷⁷ In reference to the place of needlework in the curriculum, she notes that 'training the fingers was another way of training the mind'.¹⁷⁸ The underlying thinking behind notions of training the mind through the fingers and taking Mary as a model at the time of marriage is not explored. Neither is any critical understanding offered regarding the kind of a Church the students were being integrated into and their place within that Church. Even when Nolan does turn from a focus on ideology towards everyday life by reporting that one ex-student 'hated' the school, never got used to the strict regime and felt that 'being both a Protestant and left-handed kept her apart' earned her the label of 'misfit' she makes no attempt to analyse what these constructions mean in relation to the ideology of the school.¹⁷⁹ The book contains

¹⁷⁵ See, for example, Rosemary Radford Reuther, *Sexism and God-talk: towards a feminist theology*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1983; Sandra M. Schneiders, *Beyond patching: faith and feminism in the Catholic Church*, New York, Paulist Press, 1991 and Katherine Zappone, *The hope for wholeness: a spirituality for feminists*, Mystic (Connecticut), Twenty Third Publications, 1991. In reference to the Australian scene, see Erin White & Marie Tulip, *Knowing otherwise: feminism, women and religion*, Melbourne, David Lovell Publishing, 1990 and Elaine Mary Wainwright, *Towards a feminist critical reading of the Gospel according to Matthew*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 1991.

¹⁷⁶ Nolan, p. 39.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.* p. 35.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.* p. 36.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*

many references to the visits and patronage by those in power in the Church hierarchy, specifically various bishops and archbishops. '[Archbishop] Duhig loved it all, and visited Stuartholme often, probably the trappings reminded him of pageantry in Rome in his student day.'¹⁸⁰ It seems that Nolan, too, loves it and is content with leaving the school as a place of socialisation into both the Church and society at large and to leave that socialisation unchallenged by critical reflection.

Another example of a history in which the author offers uncritical identification with school ideology is that by Errol Lea-Scarlett who was employed to write the history of St Ignatius College after Windsor's work was considered to be unacceptable.¹⁸¹ Lea-Scarlett's history is dense in that it reflects his extensive knowledge of the school archives (at the time of writing he was the school archivist). His history is similar to Nolan's in that it also provides an uncritical composite of particular aspects of the public face of the school. While Nolan's history is about school rituals and practices, Lea-Scarlett's is largely a composite of archival documents which focus on the ideals of Jesuit education, the establishment and running of the school and the contributions of the main authority figures. As with Nolan's book, his insights into the 'public' face of the school are supported by some interview material, however his focus is on the physical and organisational structure of the school and educational policy rather than on the experience of individuals who did not hold positions of power and who might challenge what Windsor refers to as 'rhetoric'. Lea-Scarlett does not offer any notion that the school is other than a success, nor does he enter into any complex dealings in considering his main characters, notably past principals.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.* p. 5.

¹⁸¹ Errol Lea-Scarlett, *Riverview: aspects of the story of Saint Ignatius College and its peninsula 1936-1988*, Sydney, Hale & Iremonger, 1989. I was alerted to the events surrounding Windsor being replaced as the school historian, the subsequent commissioning of Lea-Scarlett and the Quadrant article by Windsor himself in a telephone discussion which took place between us in October 1996. This conversation took place after I contacted him for permission to read the manuscript of his history of Saint Ignatius College. The manuscript was in the National Library, Canberra but was restricted in access. Following this conversation, he lifted the restriction on the manuscript.

In contrast to these two histories are a number of school histories in which the author/s, while focusing on the public face of the school, still bring critical comment to bear upon the ideology and those in positions of power. For example, although Geoffrey Sherington and Malcolm Prentis's history of Scots College is a centenary history, some critical comment is applied to the practices and behaviour of those within the school. The history is broken into two parts. In Part One, the College is placed in the wider context of the Australian community and is a history of the changes in administration and educational direction over the century. Here the authors' stated aim is to provide 'an outline of human endeavours and aims and also frailties . . . the triumphs and successes of the College, as well as some of its failings over the years'.¹⁸² Unlike Lea-Scarlett's history, in this history interviews were used to provide a more complex view of the main characters. For example, in referring to the principal, Allen Ernest McLucas, Sherington and Prentis state that, in the matter of discipline, he avoided ' "the quick fix" . . . would tone down a master's punishment out of a consideration that "it was the boys' life" '.¹⁸³ This statement is supported by interview evidence and the authors note that his approach was not well accepted by all: 'Some of the masters would accept this sort of thing in time, but Pinwall was simply enraged by it.'¹⁸⁴ What makes this history different from Nolan's and Lea-Scarlett's work is that not only is it set in the wider context of Australian society and educational history, but the authors also draw upon interview material to reflect the diversity of opinion and behaviour within school life. Hence, in this section of the history the authors move away from uncritical identification with the behaviour of those in positions of power.

Sherington and Prentis's attempt to provide critical reflection, as demonstrated in Part One, is not pursued in the second part of the book.

¹⁸² Geoffrey Sherington & Malcolm Prentis, *Scots to the fore: a history of the Scots College Sydney 1893-1993*, Sydney, Hale & Iremonger, 1993, p. 13.

¹⁸³ *ibid.* p. 131.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*

In fact, the authors make this clear when they state that the aim of this second part is to construct 'a celebration of the nature of The Scots College community' through 'a series of vignettes which seek to illuminate what it has meant to be a master, boy, old boy and parent in the College community over the past century'.¹⁸⁵ This celebration is achieved through chapters which describe, rather than analyse, the public symbols and practices of the school: school songs, badges, uniforms, the cadet corps, etc. There is little reflection on how these symbols and practices act as powerful forces on the shaping of the consciousness of the community involved, beyond reference to publicly stated ideology. For example, the cadets are described as being there 'to foster initiative, loyalty and leadership and act as a means of recruitment to Duntroon'.¹⁸⁶ There is no attempt to evidence that this practice actually does achieve these goals. This section offered a place to explore the symbols and practices of school life for the underlying discourses beyond ideology, for example their place in the formation of gender.¹⁸⁷ Yet no attempt is made to do so and this section generally remains at the descriptive level.

In contrast to Nolan's history and the avoidance of gender issues within Sherington and Prentis's history, the central paradox of how women have both dealt with being educated in settings which seek to slot them into predetermined female roles and yet at the same time managed somehow to use this education to find their own meanings and pursue their own paths has engaged those attempting to write histories of women in education for some time. In some histories, this dilemma remains embedded in the text, with little analysis of how this occurs, beyond at least acknowledging that it does. In others, this dilemma is addressed more directly, acknowledging the tensions between these two conflicting

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.* p. 13.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.* p. 205. Duntroon is a post-school military academy located in Canberra.

¹⁸⁷ For an example of such an attempt, see Ian D. Brice, 'Australian boys' schools and the historical construction of masculinity - an exploratory excursion', collected papers of the twenty-fourth annual conference, *Orthodoxies and diversity*, Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society, Sydney, 1995, pp. 33-42.

demands. In a number of these histories there is movement away from a focus on school ideology, organisational structure and planning towards an examination of how hegemonic practices impact on the individual. Hence they offer histories in which school ideology is, to varying degrees, challenged.

In her history of Methodist Ladies College (MLC), Kew, Victoria, *They Dreamt of a School*¹⁸⁸ Ailsa Zainu'ddin traces the changing role of women as exemplified in the history of the school, but fails to discriminate between ideologies which compete for interpretation of the role. Instead, she solves the problem of conflicting discourses by trying to find a version of an ideal balance, as demonstrated by the students who are the product of MLC.

The school has encouraged feminists, but not strident feminists. It has emphasized co-operation and mutual concern rather than confrontation and conflict. MLC is represented across the total spectrum of the women's movement of the 80's and in all political parties - along with those who eschew politics. As a single sex school with a wide range of options it has enabled girls to make choices that are not ostensibly sex-specific and to pursue them to the end. It has provided opportunities for girls to accept positions of leadership, to be creative and innovative as well as conformist.¹⁸⁹

The school is viewed as a haven which keeps its students from those who would 'put women in their place' as 'mere women'. Social processes and structures which maintain gender are seen as external to the school and the students. Additionally, the processes which allowed students to negotiate this ideal balance, if they exist, are not explored. Neither are the claimed outcomes - particularly that students were free to make their own choices - documented through any specific research.

¹⁸⁸ Ailsa Zainu'ddin, *They dreamt of a school: a centenary history of the Methodist Ladies College, 1882-1982*, Melbourne, Hyland House, 1982.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.* p. xxii.

In her recent history of Santa Sabina College, a convent school conducted by the Dominican order, Susan Emilsen also makes gender a central issue.¹⁹⁰ (This stands in contrast with her earlier history of Frensham (1988)¹⁹¹ in which she locates her history within educational reform and changes in Australian education including the progressive ideology of the school.) In her history of the Dominican convent, Emilsen works hard at dispelling the romantic myths which surround the religious. She refers to them as having a high level of business acumen and being able to make shrewd assessments in their dealings with financial and legal agencies as well as with prelates and the parents of prospective students.¹⁹² Unlike Zainu'ddin, she does not deny tensions within the women's lives such as that which existed between the religious seeking to have control over their own lives within the order while at the same time dealing with the men associated with the Church hierarchy who had their own agendas.¹⁹³ Throughout her book, she systematically addresses the changing ideology about the place of women within society and the Church. She also acknowledges that for many students their memories of the school remain a source of unease and she refers to such memories of the school in the 1950s as 'a valuable reminder that the era that so confidently paraded its piety and progress had its underside of social isolation and sometimes harsh discipline, and that Irish Australian Catholicism was undoubtedly infected by Jansenistic fanaticism and puritanism'.¹⁹⁴ Although written as part of centenary celebrations, Emilsen's history is a refreshing movement away from triumphalism, which is so much a part of Nolan's and Lea-Scarlett's histories, towards one which attempts to grapple with the various shortcomings of any school. Additionally, she turns to the reflections of ex-students to challenge the rhetoric of school

¹⁹⁰ Susan Emilsen, *Dancing St Dom's Plot: a history of Santa Sabina and Santa Maria del Monte, Strathfield*, Strathfield (NSW), Santa Sabina College, 1994.

¹⁹¹ Susan Emilsen, *Frensham: an historical perspective*, Mittagong (NSW), Winifred West Schools, 1988.

¹⁹² Emilsen, *Dancing St. Dom's Plot*, p. 26.

¹⁹³ *ibid.* In particular Chapter 1.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.* p. 106.

success, although her use of it is more to demonstrate that not all students found the school experience positive rather than to explore the impact of ideology on students.

School histories by Mackinnon and Theobald are two examples in which the authors have not only made gender central but also sought to systematically explore the impact of school ideology. In *Ruyton Remembers 1878-1978*,¹⁹⁵ Theobald locates her history within the larger forces at work in Australia, including changes in social values, attitudes to women and women's attitudes to themselves. She compares what happened at Ruyton to what happened in similar boys' schools and follows up with interviews of past students in which they discuss what they expected from themselves, especially in terms of whether they anticipated having to earn a living. Her view of the school is not as an isolated haven, but a place of intersection between prevailing ideologies and students' expectations. In *One Foot on the Ladder*,¹⁹⁶ Mackinnon takes a further step in exploring gender and schooling. She commences her history of Adelaide's first state secondary girls' school with some hard questions which guide her work: Did women value their lives in a different way when they had experienced several years of secondary schooling? Did they question or challenge their appointed role in life? Or did their educational experience strengthen their internalised sense of 'womanliness'?¹⁹⁷ She answers the questions by exploring social class background, work force needs and prevailing ideologies as providing a context for the educational experience. Through interviews, she traces the subsequent lives of students, concluding that overall the school experience 'can be seen as having reflected and reinforced women's separate position in society'.¹⁹⁸ In contrast with Zainu'ddin's work,

¹⁹⁵ Marjorie R. Theobald, *Ruyton Remembers 1878-1978*, Melbourne, Hawthorn Press, 1978.

¹⁹⁶ Alison Mackinnon, *One foot on the ladder: origins and outcomes of girls' secondary schooling in South Australia*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1984.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.* p. 6.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.* p. 175.

Mackinnon acknowledges the confused and contradictory outcomes of the schooling and the ways in which the students sought, although not successfully, to reconcile the competing notions of a belief in women's rights to an equal education, a belief in 'women's moral superiority' and her 'special role' in childcare.¹⁹⁹ Mackinnon and Theobald both move away from seeing students as passive recipients of education and of dominant discourses about gender. Mackinnon, in particular, seeks to explore the school as a context in which the processes of stratification continue in spite of beliefs in equality of opportunity.

Jill Matthews terms histories in which gender relations are the major dynamic as 'feminist history', in contrast with 'women's history' which seeks to add women into traditional historical investigation.²⁰⁰ Writers like Zainu'ddin, Emilsen, Theobald and Mackinnon may be placed on a continuum which is not necessarily chronological but rather moves towards Matthews' definition of 'feminist history' in which gender relations are central. Zainu'ddin avoids dealing with gender conflicts, seeking a tidy resolution; Theobald and Emilsen locate their histories in the wider picture of changing governmental policy and attitudes towards women; while Mackinnon acknowledges conflicting beliefs both about women's place in society and within the women themselves. In particular, the work of Theobald and Mackinnon moves away from a focus on ideology towards an exploration of the impact of ideology on students. What their work does not address, and which is to be addressed within this thesis, is the *diverse* ways in which individuals process ideology, take meaning from it, and use it to guide behaviour. Nor do they investigate how students sought, in day to day life, to find meaning in the school experience.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.* p. 176.

²⁰⁰ Jill J. Matthews, *Good and mad women: the historical construction of femininity in twentieth-century Australia*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1984, p. 150.

A third salient characteristic of school histories is a heavy reliance on chronology in shaping the general nature of the history. The vast majority of school histories tend to follow a pattern of chapters which reflect the progressive passing of chronological time. A school history which represents a rare break from this reliance on chronology is that of Melbourne Girls Grammar School.²⁰¹ This history is an edited book in which a number of well known historians, such as W.F. Connell and Lyndsay Gardiner as well as Theobald and Zainu'ddin, have written essays on various facets of the school's history. While this history generally continues to represent a focus on the public face of the school, it is refreshing that there is some diversity of opinion amongst the writers. What is disappointing is that in an essay on ex-students, Pip Nicholson, 'a distinguished Old Girl',²⁰² has chosen to focus on the professional life of seven old girls, with a note that there was 'not sufficient scope in this chapter to consider the ex-students who devoted their adult lives to marriage and child-rearing'.²⁰³ Nicholson has constructed the chapter so as to suggest that the views of these seven women may be interpreted as reflecting the totality of school ideology. For example, one of the seven recalled that the school encouraged girls to reject 'anything that was authoritarian' and concludes that such thoughts 'permeated her attitude to life'.²⁰⁴ The lack of representation from ex-students who pursued more conventional life-styles undermines the validity of this conclusion. Standing in contrast to this edited collection of the critical reflections of a number of historians are a small number of histories in which the entire book consists of unanalysed experience.²⁰⁵ Here the author acts as an

²⁰¹ Roslyn McCarthy & Marjorie R. Theobald (eds), *Melbourne Girls Grammar School: centenary essays 1893-1993*, Melbourne, Hyland House, 1993.

²⁰² *ibid.* p. 6.

²⁰³ Pip Nicholson, 'Merton Hall women and professional life: 1917-1938', in McCarthy & Theobald, p. 69.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.* p. 85.

²⁰⁵ See, for example, although the first history is a composite history of a number of schools, Kel Watkins, *Readin' 'Ritin' 'Rithmetic: stories of school and school days from 1898-1986 from the Coomandook and Coonalpyn areas*, Adelaide, The Warrendi Project, Coomandook Area School, Coomandook, 1986 and Myrtle Gillham, Ronald Dunlop & Joanne Birkel, *S.C.E.G.G.S. Redlands in retrospect: the story of the school from 1884 to 1965*, 2nd ed., Sydney,

editor bringing together the recollections of various individuals. The latter reflect a pendulum swing from a focus on school ideology, in which the author identifies with the school ideology offering virtually no critique, towards a total focus on the experiences of individuals in which their recollections hold full authority.

A history which moves away from an emphasis on ideology and chronology towards a history in which the experience of individuals are used to offer critique to the ideology and hegemonic practices of the school as well as to illustrate the complexity of school life is Greg Denning's history of Xavier College.²⁰⁶ Denning's comment that 'the rhetoric about a school, constant and important as it is, is not the reality'²⁰⁷ is singular in locating his suspicion in regards to the central place of ideology in school histories.²⁰⁸ He both exposes and challenges the hegemonic practices of the school and in one telling paragraph he uses the memories of ex-students, gathered through a survey of 400, to indicate tensions in the memories of ex-students.

When the boys remember the prefects, they remember their flogging ways and the guerilla war that gets created between the high regulators and the highly regulated. They also remember, especially if they were leaders in sport and other recreational activity, the cooperative comradeship of organising games. They remember being counselled and discovering personal moments with the prefects behind the depersonalisation of an almost total institution.²⁰⁹

S.C.E.G.G.S., 1990. For an English example, see H.F. MacDonald (ed.), *A hundred years of Fettes: memories of Old Fettesians 1870-1970*, Edinburgh, T. & A. Constable Ltd, 1970.

²⁰⁶ Greg Denning, *Xavier: a centenary portrait*, Melbourne, The Old Xaverians' Association, 1978.

²⁰⁷ *ibid.* p. 14.

²⁰⁸ In his unpublished history of St Ignatius College, Windsor acknowledges the influence of Denning on his work, in particular the distinction Denning makes between rhetoric and reality. Windsor, Friends and sometime scholars, p. 5.

²⁰⁹ *ibid.* p. 19. This seems to be a reference to Erving Goffman's notion of 'total institution' developed in reference to U.S. mental asylums, and defined as 'a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life'. Erving Goffman, *Asylums: essay on the social situation of mental patients and inmates*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1961, p. 11.

The theme of the school as 'an almost total institution' runs strongly throughout the book and reflects the research of other writers of the period who explored aspects of Catholicism from a sociological perspective.²¹⁰ Denning writes: 'It should be remembered that if one aspect of life at the school was its totally public nature - there were no places and no times of privacy - another aspect was the careful measurement of privilege and right that the subjects of total institutions observe.'²¹¹ Rather than simply focusing on a chronological unfolding of the school structure, Denning picks up the fabric of various aspects of school life and explores it. For example, the Jesuits, like many other orders including the Dominican and Sacred Heart orders, had until the 1960s a separate class of lay brothers (the teaching Jesuits were ordained priests). The existence of this system is indicative of class aspects of Catholic boarding schools such as Kerever Park, Santa Sabina College and Xavier which served the upper middle class echelons of Australian Catholic society.²¹² Denning's voice is strong in assessing the demeaned position of these men and exploring, albeit superficially, related inner processes: 'Almost to a man they were "characters", as if the assertion of their distinctive personalities offset somewhat their menial role and social exclusion in the Society of Jesus.'²¹³ His considered view stands in contrast with that of Emilsen who explains this hierarchical system within the gender role assigned to the sisters and in terms of how the members of the religious order explained it.

Lay sisters were often significant community builders and homemakers. They often made the kitchen 'the heart of the house' for both nuns and students. The practice of rigid separation at prayers and recreation was nevertheless carefully observed. According to

²¹⁰ See in particular, Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, *Out of the cloister: a study of organizational dilemmas*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1977 and Helen Praetz, *Building a school system: a sociological study of Catholic education*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1980.

²¹¹ Denning, p. 24.

²¹² See Cave p. 28 where he refers to Sacred Heart education as having been 'an integral part of the education of certain categories of Catholic women in this country'.

²¹³ *ibid.* p. 16.

current opinion, both in Ireland and Australia, this separation was for the benefit of the lay sister.²¹⁴

Dening also hints at, but does not actively address, the impact of religious symbols on the formation of consciousness. 'Signs and symbols are everywhere, one's eyes see them but never see them.'²¹⁵

By focusing on the ideology of the school, the vast majority of school histories have tended to serve the discursive function of the subordination of individual meaning to the ideological meaning of the institution - meaning generally defined by those in positions of power. As Donna Haraway suggests, making heard the story of members of oppressed groups leads to an exploration of 'identity on the margins of hegemonic groups and thereby deconstructing the authority and legitimacy of dominant humanist narratives by exposing their partiality'.²¹⁶ In contrast, an aim of this thesis is to locate centrally the experience of individuals, especially those who were not in positions of power within the school: ex-students, ordinary teachers and the lay sisters. I consider that the work of this thesis significantly extends the work of Dening, Emilsen, Theobald and Mackinnon. In particular, in focusing on experience, I seek to explore the construction of individual consciousness within the memories of school experience.

In this shift from public meaning to private experience, there is a need to move away from an emphasis on chronological time. Melucci has drawn attention to the contrast between the social construction of time and the 'time' of individual consciousness.

In inner experience time is not measurable. Our perceptions of duration vary according to the moment and the situation; indeed, on

²¹⁴ Emilsen, *Dancing St. Dom's Plot*, p. 27.

²¹⁵ Dening, p. 240.

²¹⁶ Cited in Jana Sawicki, 'Foucault, feminism and questions of identity', in Gutting, p. 306. Haraway is actually referring to the experiences of women of colour, so that I have adapted her interpretation.

certain occasions time may cease to flow and come to a standstill. There are discontinuities and breaks which may obstruct its continuous movement. Inner rhythms vary; they never belong entirely to just one category of experience; there are moments of anguish or reflection which take an eternity to pass while entire days can slip by in an instant.²¹⁷

In focusing on the experience of individuals this history will not be one in which chronological time provides the central organiser. Rather, the focus will be on the struggle for meaning across time - then and now.

A fourth characteristic of school histories is that the majority of them, especially those written by commissioned historians, are histories of secondary schools. As Burkhardt has indicated, it is mainly independent *secondary* schools who employ historians to write their histories. Even Emilsen, who has included the primary school of Santa Sabina College within her title, admits she has not adequately addressed this history and that her focus is on the secondary rather than the primary school.²¹⁸ The outcome of this focus is that the stories of primary schools have been marginalised in the genre of school histories.²¹⁹ Another aim of this thesis is to add to the redressing of this imbalance.

A final characteristic of most school histories is that the experiences of individuals, especially those not in positions of power are marginalised. Nolan, Sherington and Prentis, Zainu'ddin, Theobald and Mackinnon all refer to using some form of reflections from ex-students and teachers but the emphasis they place on them differs. For example, Zainu'ddin's interviews are not included in her list of sources. Instead, we discover this aspect of her methodology when she offers thanks to one of her assistants: 'I owe a particular debt to Mimi (Yees) Roennfedt for her initial exploration of the Methodist reports and *Spectator* and her

²¹⁷ Melucci, p. 19.

²¹⁸ Emilsen, *Dancing St. Dom's Plot*, p. 14.

²¹⁹ Tudor House in Moss Vale (NSW) celebrates its centenary in 1997. At the end of the year, a history of this junior preparatory boys' boarding school will be published.

companionship in interviews.'²²⁰ A conclusion which could be drawn from this way of documenting this aspect of methodology is that interviews are not regarded as a part of the hard data gathering and belong instead to the 'private' world of helpers and women. Nolan refers to the 'reminiscences'²²¹ she employed within her text, although she does not use them to challenge systematically any of the ideology. In both her school histories, Emilsen uses her interviews and surveys (although the distinction between these two forms of methodology is not made clear in her referencing) to indicate the attitudes of ex-students and current students towards their school. This stands in contrast to the work of Theobald, who employs interviews as a way in, not only to exploring the impact of the school on students, but also to locating what students brought to the experience in terms of their own expectations about participating in paid work on completion of their schooling. Mackinnon takes a more complex attitude towards studying interview material by using it to explore how ex-students had gone about reconciling or not reconciling the competing notions of womanhood. Finally, while Theobald and Mackinnon have actively attempted to study, rather than simply to use interview material to support their arguments, Denning acknowledges the selective nature of memory: if the 'daily record of the institution and the selective memories of those who endured it are a guide' then 'the school is far more mundane than the myths that it daily proclaims about itself, and its influence is more lasting in the moods that memory prompts'.²²² His comment echoes the focus of this thesis which is to analyse those 'selective' memories for the lasting impact of the school experience and as a site of the formation of consciousness by school ideology and related discursive practices. However, it is my contention that, rather than being mundane, the history of a school, as reflected in the experience of those involved, is highly informative. For example, let

²²⁰ Zainu'ddin, p. xxii.

²²¹ Nolan, Acknowledgments.

²²² Denning, p. 20.

me take an example from my own experience which illustrates this process.

One of the main figures in the social history of the Society of the Sacred Heart is St Madeleine Sophie, the founding superior of the order. Versions of her story were told to the students at Kerever Park and to the religious in their formative years. As a child at Kerever Park, I remember often being told stories about her life. One story I remember clearly, because it impressed me so much, was one in which she took the pretty dresses her father had given her and threw them in the fire because she believed that God was more important than such frivolity. In this story I imagined her as the child of relatively affluent parents, as I was, being the daughter of a doctor, with a father who was as powerful and knowledgeable as mine was and I was astounded that anyone would have the courage and conviction to stand up to such a person. As a result of this story, Madeleine Sophie remained for me a model of someone who was prepared to stand up for what she believed, even against the power of the father. As an adult and a feminist, I often wandered back to that story in my thoughts and mused as to how, in Catholic girls' schools, the lives of the saints may have been ultimately preparing us for our fight against the patriarchy of the Church and society in general. Imagine my surprise when in my research for this thesis I found no such evidence of the story as I remembered it. Rather, what is reported in the various versions of her life is that she was the child of a wine cooper in rural France (definitely not the child of an affluent family) and that she led a very repressed life at the hands of her much older brother, Louis. When Madeleine Sophie was still a child, Louis became a priest and insisted she follow an extremely rigorous plan of studies which included studying complex Catholic theology. One day, when her brother found that Madeleine Sophie had spent some of her time making herself a pretty dress in the mode of what was high fashion at the time, rather than engaging in her studies, he threw the offending garment into the fire. In these versions of her life, which I discuss in chapter two, Madeleine

Sophie was not a feminist, at least not in my terms, rather she accepted the will of the fathers as being the will of God. It is important, as I will demonstrate, to explore the social history of any group, yet it is also important to explore how individuals construct their subjectivity in relation to their understanding of that history.

In summary, the histories reviewed here, which are representative of the recent field of school histories in Australia, bear witness to my argument that a focus on structure and planning often leads to a history which is determined by school ideology. In contrast, seeking to include the experience of those involved has led, in some cases, to histories which move away from being located purely within ideology; for example, those by Denning, Emilsen, Theobald and Mackinnon, as well as the first part of Sherington and Prentis's book. Since Theobald and Mackinnon have sought to study actively interviews with ex-students as a way in to exploring consciousness as the site of gender construction, particularly as it relates to work and gender roles, their histories come closest to the focus of this thesis. What distinguishes this thesis from their work is analysis of individual narratives as the site of the complex nature of the construction of subjectivity. Such analysis allows for exploration of the diverse ways in which individuals responded to, resisted and created meanings, hence allowing insight into the process of the formation of consciousness. In this case, while gender is central, the focus is wider allowing for the variable and multiple nature of subjectivity. This general aim will be achieved by locating what discourses are active in such constructions and how individuals situate themselves in relationship to these discourses, hence in some instances melding with certain discourses, while at other times resisting them or creating their own meanings. By adopting such an approach, I aim to move away from a functionalist exploration of the 'school' in which policies and plans are made which students then receive, towards an exploration of the consciousness of the individual as the site of a battle for the formation of subjectivity which is in keeping with the goals of those who have vested interests in the school. As this

school was a Catholic school, the ultimate influential group was the Catholic Church. Additionally, what distinguishes this thesis from the work of Mackinnon and Theobald is that within their histories the voices of those involved remained muted. In contrast, my commitment is to allow the voices of those involved to take a central place within sections of the text. This commitment is connected to two specific goals. First, to allow the voices of those previously marginalised in school histories to surface so that the history is located in the experience of those students and teachers who were not in positions of power but rather were those who were the everyday bearers and/or intended recipients of school ideology. In doing so, my aim is to explore how such ideology mediated the everyday life of those involved and how they developed their own meanings within that setting. In keeping with my focus on experience I have not devoted a specific chapter to Lillian McGee, the mistress general²²³ of Kerever Park for the twenty-two years of its operation. Rather, I have allowed the narratives of the religious, most of whom were young women just out of the novitiate at the time of their appointment to the school, and the narratives of ex-students, to take precedence. The story of Lillian McGee is told through their experiences.²²⁴ A second goal is to reveal the complexity and tension inherent in an enterprise named as school, hence avoiding any temptation to assume that what passes as school ideology is solely what defines the school. Interviews with the religious and ex-students who were part of the school are central in the methodology of this work.

Interviews

Fifteen interviews were conducted in relation to this research: seven with religious who taught at the school (two of this group were also students

²²³ The title 'mistress general' was used within the Society to denote the principal of the school.

²²⁴ Indeed, it has not been possible to interview those who were in senior positions within the school as none is living, except those who took the position of mistress of discipline. The religious who was the longest serving in this position has been interviewed. The others were not accessible.

there); seven interviews with ex-students (including the two religious who were also ex-students brings this group total to nine); and a joint interview with a married couple who undertook farming and domestic work at the school for almost the entire period of its operation. (See Appendix II.) On the matter of the validity of a small number of interviews afforded by the in-depth approach, Watson concludes that the user of this approach needs to move away from 'pretensions of quantification' and instead to use them to generalise about patterns of sociostructural relations. The issue is not whether participants are typical or not but rather that their stories allow illustration of social processes which emerge from particular structural relations. Finally, he argues that the value of additional case studies is that they have the potential to reveal more of the complexity of social processes and to illustrate how structural relations emerge under a different set of conditions.²²⁵ An assumption which could be made from this conclusion, and also from examination of the case studies contained in this research, is that each person brings a different set of conditions into any setting. These different conditions arise from previous experience. Hence, each case provides the opportunity to explore the complexity of the social processes as reflected in the experience of each individual. In my analysis of the interviews, I have sought to approach them as 'constructions' of the experience of school life which relate to the whole of life (experience before and after time at the school) and hence which reflect this diversity. This diversity also gives rise, as Watson suggests, to examination of the ways in which structural relations emerge under different sets of conditions. In writing up the interviews with the religious and ex-students, a case study approach has been employed. The narrative of the couple who worked at the school was explored to provide additional information regarding hegemonic practices associated with the school - information which is included within the reporting where appropriate.

²²⁵ Watson, p. 5.

Links to Other Stories

While a history of any school tends to stand in its own right in relationship to the community involved, there are also links to the wider field of educational and social history. Two specific fields which relate to this history are those regarding the work of the Society of the Sacred Heart as well as that of Catholic education in general within Australia. Given that this thesis is focused on primary children, there are also links to the history of childhood in Australia. While a review of educational histories which relate to the work of the Society is included in this section, chapter two of this thesis includes a critical analysis of writings which relate to the order while chapter three includes a critical analysis of writings about the educational ideology of the order as exemplified at Kerever Park.

A review of research related to the history of Catholic education in Australia reveals that it tends to fall into four categories. First, histories which cover the development of the system and which focus on structure, planning and policy. Ronald Fogarty's history of Catholic education 1806-1950 is the most extensive and builds upon the earlier work of Urban Corrigan.²²⁶ A more recent work, published by the Catholic Education Office in Sydney, is that by John Luttrell.²²⁷ This last publication is much smaller in scope than the previous works. A number of histories focus on the issue of state aid.²²⁸ The history of Catholic education has also resided within comprehensive histories of Australian

²²⁶ See Urban Corrigan, *Catholic education in New South Wales*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1930 and Ronald Fogarty, *Catholic education in Australia 1806-1950*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1975.

²²⁷ John Luttrell, *Worth the struggle: Sydney Catholic schools 1820 - 1995*, Sydney, Catholic Education Office Sydney, 1996. For a more comprehensive study see John Luttrell, 'You've taken our schools! The role and development of the Catholic Education Office Sydney 1939-1987', M.Ed. Thesis, University of Sydney, 1992.

²²⁸ For example, Gregory Haines, *Lay Catholics and the education question in nineteenth century NSW: the shaping of a decision*, Sydney, Catholic Theological Faculty, 1976; Michael Hogan, *The Catholic campaign for state aid to non-government schools in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, 1952-1972*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sydney, 1977 and Michael Hogan, *The Catholic campaign for state aid: a study of a pressure group campaign in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, 1950-1972*, Sydney, Catholic Theological Faculty, 1978.

education.²²⁹ A second category which moves away from an emphasis on structure has been one in which the focus is gender.²³⁰ A number of these histories have included oral histories.²³¹ A third category is those in which the history of Catholic education is reviewed in order to provide the starting point for contemporary explorations and future directions.²³² Individual histories of Catholic schools may be grouped together as a fourth category although, as discussed in the previous section, some focus on structure, planning and policy while others take gender as a central organising theme. Yet in setting out these categories, there are few books which may be assigned to each category and an overall review of the history of Catholic education reveals a serious lack of critical work in the area.

The lack of critical analysis of the system from a historical perspective may partly be accounted for by the sectarianism which marked Australian society until the end of the 1950s as well as the founding notions which underlie Catholic education.²³³ A glance through histories of the early

²²⁹ See, for example, J.E. Bourke, 'Catholic education in Australia', in P. Tannock (ed.), *The organisation and administration of Catholic education in Australia*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1975; John Cleverley, *Half a million children: studies of non-government education in Australia*, Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1978; Alan Barcan, *A history of Australian education*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1980 and Alan Barcan, *Sociological theory and educational reality: education and society in Australia since 1949*, Sydney, NSW University Press, 1993.

²³⁰ See Noelene Kyle, *Her natural destiny: the education of women in NSW*, Sydney, NSW University Press, 1986; Susan Mary Tobin, 'The winter is over: culture and customs associated with Catholic schools', written for the *Conference of Catholic Education Queensland*, Brisbane, Conference of Catholic Education, Queensland, 1987 and C. N. Lewis, *Provision for the education of Catholic women in Australia since 1840*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1990.

²³¹ See, for example, Madeleine Sophie McGrath, *Women religious in the history of Australia: a case study: the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta*, Ph.D. Thesis, Macquarie University, 1988 and Stephanie Burley, *None more anonymous? Catholic teaching nuns, their secondary students and students in South Australia 1880-1925*, M.Ed. Thesis, University of Adelaide, 1993.

²³² See J.E. Bourke, 'Australian Catholic schools into the seventies', *Quarterly Review of Australian Education*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1969, pp. 1-43; Peter Gill (ed.), *Catholic education: where is it going?* Melbourne, Cassell Australia, 1972 and Richard Selleck, 'An overview', in *Catholic education in Victoria: yesterday, today and tomorrow*, Melbourne, The Catholic Education Office of Victoria, 1985, pp. 99-112.

²³³ It seems that critical reflection regarding the Catholic system has been directed towards reviews of the effectiveness of religious education within the system. Graham Rossiter reported, in 1983, on fifty seven published research reports and eighty seven higher degree theses on religious

development of Catholic education in Australia reveals an argument that the establishment of the system was based on a belief that Catholic education was synonymous with faith. Catholic bishops considered state schools, established by each colony between 1872 and 1893 under separate Education Acts,²³⁴ to be 'seed-plots of future immorality, infidelity and lawlessness'.²³⁵ The Catholics in Australia, especially the Church hierarchy, held on to their desire for a separate school system. Initially, all church schools received funding from colonial governments but this was finally withdrawn when state education systems were established as 'free, secular and compulsory'. In response to these financial constraints, other religious denominations accepted that their formal educational efforts would need to be confined to private schools which generally would be accessed only by those who could afford to pay. In contrast, the Catholics, as did the Lutherans, held on to a belief which saw education not as 'mere schooling, but as the living transmission of values preparing children for life here and hereafter'.²³⁶ This belief was to fuel a political struggle between the Church hierarchy and various colonial and federal governments which lasted until the second half of the twentieth century when state financial aid was finally given.²³⁷ Due to the inability of the Catholic Church and its parishioners to pay for a separate system, various European and Irish religious teaching orders, both male and female, were approached by the Church hierarchy. These orders were requested to make Australian foundations in order to service Catholic schools, virtually at no cost, thereby making them accessible to all Catholic

effectiveness of Church related schools, particularly Catholic schools. See Graham M. Rossiter, *A review of Australian research related to religious education in schools*, Sydney, National Catholic Research Council, 1983. The following books by Marcellin Flynn also fall into the same category: Marcellin Flynn, *The effectiveness of Catholic schools*, Sydney, St Paul's, 1985 and Marcellin Flynn, *The culture of Catholic schools*, Sydney, St Paul's, 1993.

²³⁴ Robert E. Dixon, *The Catholics in Australia*, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1996, p. 5.

²³⁵ Edmund Campion, *Australian Catholics*, Ringwood (Victoria), Viking, 1987, p. 34.

²³⁶ *ibid.* See also Fogarty, p. 479.

²³⁷ For a detailed discussion of the battle for state aid in NSW and ACT between 1952 and 1972, see Hogan, *The Catholic campaign for state aid: a study of a pressure group*.

children.²³⁸ The arrival in Sydney in 1882 of five members of the Society of the Sacred Heart was in response to such a request.²³⁹

Sectarianism was an early feature of Australian society and 'only really diminished to an inconsequential level' after the second World War.²⁴⁰ Until this period, and post-war migration from Europe, the Catholic Church had predominantly been Irish. In the early period of the colonisation of Australia, it was the Irish working class who made up the vast bulk of its membership. Irish resentment towards the English government was replicated in the relationship between the Church and the State. 'Choking off state aid' was seen by the Church hierarchy as a strategy in a 'religious war'.²⁴¹ Additionally, agitation by the Church hierarchy for state funding contributed towards the continuance of such sectarianism. Non-Catholics believed that in moving out of the state system and wanting funding for their own schools, 'Catholics wanted to have their cake and eat it as well!'²⁴² Sectarianism continued into the twentieth century, with most Catholics belonging to the Australian Labor Party. Naomi Turner, in her social history of Catholics in Australia, argues that the hymn ' "Faith of our Fathers, living still, In spite of dungeon, fire and sword"', had connotations embedded in the Catholic attitude at this time' in that it 'was a rousing call to battle with the persecutors of the Church of God'.²⁴³ In 1916, sectarianism flared again

²³⁸ Within Australia, the Catholics have fought to maintain a separate, formal system of Catholic education which is provided to the general Catholic population at a low cost. There is also a number of more expensive independent Catholic schools which are not part of this formal, separate system but which are conducted by various religious teaching orders. These schools are similar to other independent, corporate schools, a number of which are also conducted by non-Catholic religious denominations. See Sherington, Petersen & Brice for discussion on corporate schools in Australia.

²³⁹ The Society originally turned down a request in 1880 by Archbishop Vaughan but when John Hughes, a 'notable citizen of Sydney and a member of the Legislative Council', offered a donation of five hundred pounds towards the initial expenses as well as a financial contribution towards the purchase of land, the superior general of the Society agreed. See Barlow, pp. 14-17.

²⁴⁰ Dixon, p. 4.

²⁴¹ Campion, p. 34.

²⁴² Naomi Turner, *Catholics in Australia: a social history*, vol. 1, North Blackburn (Victoria), Collins Dove, 1992, p. 271.

²⁴³ *ibid.* p. 285.

when Catholics resisted the notion of conscription, owing to the alignment of Irish Catholics against the British government. Again, such debate led to strong anti-Catholic feeling.²⁴⁴ The period between the two wars saw the entrenchment of Catholic solidarity and expression of it in public displays. Catholic newspapers were established in each state and public processions associated with various religious feast days were held. Turner summarises this period in the following manner.

When Australian Catholics prayed that the kingdom of God would come on earth they, influenced by their clergy and their own Irish forebears, usually meant that the kingdom of the Catholic Church with its Irish traditions and links would assert itself and rule in Australia.²⁴⁵

It could be considered that the final *dénouement* in this story of sectarianism came in the 1950s and the split in the Australian Labor Party.

Catholic Action, a lay movement under the patronage of the Catholic hierarchy in Australia and in Rome, was prevalent in Australia in the 1940s and early 1950s. It also sponsored a number of smaller organisations such as the Young Catholic Student Movement, the Young Christian Workers' Movement, the Catholic Youth Organisation and the National Catholic Girls' Movement. At the heart of Catholic Action was the fear of communism and this fear led to many Catholics joining it. Bartholomew A. (Bob) Santamaria became a member of the Secretariat of Catholic Action in 1937. In particular, Santamaria was committed to halting the growing communist influence in trade unions by organising Catholic workers against it. In response, Catholic workers, 'closer to the line' of communist infiltration, banded together to form the Catholic Social Studies Movement (known as the Movement). Santamaria became a spokesperson for this group and for the growing fight against communism by Catholic workers. Australian bishops also supported the

²⁴⁴ *ibid.* pp. 295-298.

²⁴⁵ *ibid.* vol. 2, p. 89.

Movement, although secretly.²⁴⁶ Commitment to the fight against communism, on the part of Santamaria and the Movement, finally led to split in the Australian Labor Party, with a breakaway group forming the Democratic Labor Party in 1954. Santamaria was influential in this splinter group, however, the outcome of the split was that Catholics were confused. No longer could they easily identify with one party which generally represented the Catholic interest. Additionally, it became public knowledge that the Catholic bishops had been dealing in politics.²⁴⁷

In 1957, the Church hierarchy in Sydney were hopeful of attaining state aid for their schools, however, the Movement and its links with the Democratic Labor Party were proving to be detrimental to achieving this aim. Finally, the Roman hierarchy directed the Movement to cease any political action and to confine itself to the spiritual and moral formation of the laity under the direction of the bishops.²⁴⁸ The outcome of these events was that Catholics felt free to move away from their alignment with the Labor Party and by the 1960s they voted for the party which would support their schools. Robert Menzies, as leader of the Liberal Party, capitalised on this shift.²⁴⁹

Post-war immigration from Europe, the political confusion which arose from the events of the Labor Part split, and the advent of Vatican Two, resulted in a breaking down of the Irish influence on Catholicism in Australia in the 1960s.²⁵⁰ It could be argued that the organisational system of Kerever Park, based on a hierarchical social order and a sectarian world view, was similar to that of the Church as a whole in the pre-Vatican Two period. Similarly the demise of the school, occurred in

²⁴⁶ *ibid.* pp. 162-172.

²⁴⁷ *ibid.* p. 172.

²⁴⁸ Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and community: an Australian history*, 3rd ed., Sydney, NSW University Press, 1992 (1985), p.402.

²⁴⁹ Turner, vol. 2, p. 181.

²⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 17. Here Turner argues that the demise of the Irish influence occurred as early as 1939, although it was not obvious at that time.

the period of transition, as the Church moved away from a hierarchical model of control towards a 'community of faith' in which the hierarchy was still important but based on a service model.²⁵¹

The legacy of the belief that Catholic education was synonymous with faith lasted well into this century. It could thus be considered that to criticise Catholic education is to criticise the sacred. Even in the 1990s, writers of histories of Catholic schools have not escaped this legacy. For example, in her introduction to a history of Santa Sabina College, Emilsen states that the school 'epitomises sacred space, tradition and history' and that 'the historian "dances" knowing that she is privileged to tread on a sacred piece of earth'.²⁵² While Emilsen offers some critical review, this comment reveals that the notion of the Catholic school as somehow sacred is well entrenched. Additionally, the fact that Catholic orders, which historically have staffed the Catholic school systems, were founded by women and men who are canonised saints adds to the notion of the schools as sacred places. Feminist Catholic theologian, Katherine Zappone, argues that because religious symbols are 'perceived as coming from human experience' with ultimate authority from God, they hold extraordinary authority and to challenge them 'is often understood as confronting the power of God'.²⁵³

A more pragmatic reason for the lack of critical comment about Catholic schools may reside in the dependence of these schools on government funding. The political and financial security of the Catholic school system has been hard won. It may be that there is reluctance by those associated with Catholic education, being those who might have interest in writing histories of the system, to offer public critical comment.

²⁵¹ Dixon, p. 9.

²⁵² Emilsen, *Dancing St Dom's Plot*, p. 10.

²⁵³ Zappone, p. 29.

A lack of critical reflection also characterises historical writings about the educational work of the Society of the Sacred Heart. At best, these works belong to what may be termed traditional history, with an emphasis on chronology, the origins and development of educational ideology and related practices, and the contributions of figures of authority. For example, an early work written in 1936 by Mary O'Leary traces the origins of the educational system offered by the Society - origins which are traced back to pre-revolutionary France.²⁵⁴ The identified 'tradition' arising from these early influences is then chronologically traced through to more modern schools. Donald Cave, drawing heavily on O'Leary, also identified the origins of the educational system as practised by the Society in Australia. He notes that in this setting the Society ultimately limited its educational attempts to the education of upper middle class girls after failed attempts to transplant the concept of the 'poor school' into Australia.²⁵⁵ His analysis of the work of the Society in Australia is largely focused on the work of Mother Amélia Salmon who led the establishment of the Society within Australia and, while there are references to her experience, it is her attempts to adapt the educational practice of the Society to the Australian setting which take priority. When histories of individual schools run by the Society have been written, such as Nolan's history of Stuartholme or Barlow's history of Rose Bay Convent, the approach taken is celebratory rather than an attempt at critical reflection which includes the experience of those not in positions of power. A movement away from a traditional approach has been undertaken by Nikola Baumgarten who provides a revisionist approach by analysing the work of the Society in St Louis in the United States in the early part of the nineteenth century. In particular, she explored the contribution of the educational work of the Society to the Republican ideal of universal schooling as well as its role in inculcating in students

²⁵⁴ Mary O'Leary, *Education with a tradition: an account of the educational work of the Society of the Sacred Heart*, London, University of London Press, 1936.

²⁵⁵ Cave, p. 34.

the American ideal of womanhood.²⁵⁶ However, none of these works includes any systematic study of the experience of students and, where the experience of the religious is included, it is the experience of those in positions of power which is addressed in detail.

Margaret MacCurtain has noted that there is a need 'to hear the voices of women religious'²⁵⁷ and that there is a need for lay historians to make a contribution to the field providing 'an objectivity not always available to those caught up in that way of life'.²⁵⁸ (It is interesting to note that most histories of the Society have been written by members of the order.)²⁵⁹ Similarly, American Mary Jo Weaver in her exploration of Catholic women in that society states that women are invisible in American Catholic history.²⁶⁰ The work of making them visible, she argues, includes rescuing them from 'obscurity or from pious sentimental (and often historically inaccurate) accounts of their lives written for the edification of the community'.²⁶¹ That work is now under way both in America and in Australia.²⁶²

²⁵⁶ Nikola Baumgarten, 'Education and democracy in frontier St Louis: the Society of the Sacred Heart', *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1994, pp. 171-192.

²⁵⁷ Margaret MacCurtain, 'Late in the field: Catholic sisters in the twentieth-century and the new religious history', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 6, no. 4 / vol. 7, no. 1, 1995, p. 58.

²⁵⁸ *ibid.* p. 59.

²⁵⁹ For example, histories by Barlow and Williams, *Society of the Sacred Heart*.

²⁶⁰ Mary Jo Weaver, *New Catholic women: a contemporary challenge to traditional religious authority*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1985, p. 1.

²⁶¹ *ibid.* p. 26.

²⁶² In the American and Canadian context, see Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the veil: an alternative to marriage, motherhood and spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1902*, Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1987 and Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, 'Patriarchal bargains and latent avenues of social mobility: nuns in the Roman Catholic Church', *Gender and Society*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1993, pp. 400-414. In Australia, see Sabine Willis (ed.), *Women, faith and fetes: essays in the history of women and church in Australia*, Melbourne, Dove Communication, 1977; Madeleine Sophie McGrath, *These women? Women religious in the history of Australia, the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta 1888-1988*, Sydney, NSW University Press, 1988; Marie Therese Foale, *The Josephites go west: the Sisters of St Joseph in Western Australia, 1887-1920*, Fremantle (W.A.), University of Notre Dame, 1995 and Anne Henderson, *Mary MacKillop's sisters: a life unveiled*, Sydney, Harper Collins, 1997.

Weaver argues that within the Church religious have had their lives determined for them by 'far-removed males'.²⁶³ This shaping has included viewing them as incarnations of the 'eternal feminine'.²⁶⁴ Certainly, earlier Australian educational historians, such as Fogarty, a male teaching brother, joined in such stereotyping.

Not only were the daughters of these hardy pioneers to learn whatever the religious had to teach them of art and letters but also those indefinable qualities that are transmitted, as it were, from one soul to another - courtesy in speech, ease in manner and conversation, true simplicity, poise and nobility of carriage; lastly, good taste and judgement.²⁶⁵

Weaver notes that such 'pedastization robs the object of any real freedom or movement' and argues that within the Church women religious have been kept in the role of the 'dutiful daughter' who never even reach the adolescent stage.²⁶⁶ The work of challenging the sacred symbol of 'nuns' has begun in the Australian setting. For example, in 1984 the National Major Superiors of religious orders in Australia commissioned Turner to undertake a qualitative study on religious life and her work makes a significant contribution to this field.²⁶⁷ This work documents the hierarchical nature of religious life, the residue of pain and anger for many members, and it provides examples of a number of religious who attempted to resist the desire to destroy their individuality. Her work breaks open the stereotype of all religious as passive and accepting of all aspects of this way of life.

Closer to the area of educational history is Madeleine Sophie McGrath's history of the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta which acknowledges the low

²⁶³ Weaver, p. 71. See also Maureen Purcell, 'The original sin: submission as survival: women religious in the early Maitland Diocese', in Willis, pp. 194-217.

²⁶⁴ *ibid.*

²⁶⁵ Fogarty, p. 299.

²⁶⁶ Weaver, p. 73.

²⁶⁷ Naomi Turner, *Which seeds shall grow? Men and women in religious life*, Blackburn (Victoria), Collins Dove, 1988.

status of religious within the Church. It also reveals the conflicting discourses which confronted the religious, especially those in authority.

There was tension in the life of the woman religious since she was in a position of leadership and was expected to assume this responsibility but, at the same time, she was hidden in the supposed shades of humility as befitted one in the state of perfection and a professed spouse of Christ. While the title 'bride of Christ' resulted in special esteem for women religious on the one hand, on the other it opened the way for the oppressive protectiveness of the female virgin state on the part of the male-run Church.²⁶⁸

McGrath also reflects on the hierarchical nature of religious life in the 1950s and 1960s and uses oral history to exemplify these findings. According to those religious who participated in her research, during this period religious were not encouraged to think for themselves, to explore their talents or show initiative. It was a case of 'whatever you say, Reverend Mother'.²⁶⁹ McGrath concludes that such a lifestyle was imbued with tension and that, due to the limited education and power of the religious, 'it would be the responsibility of far-seeing men of standing within the Church' to liberate the women.²⁷⁰

The work of Turner and McGrath includes the period in which Kerever Park existed as a school. During this period, the young religious at the school also lived in a hierarchical system, in which they were kept as dutiful daughters with their initiative repressed and their opportunities for further education severely limited. The work of writers such as Turner and McGrath has moved towards breaking open the myth of religious life as one of trouble free religiosity. The work undertaken in this thesis further documents the nature of religious life in this period and adds to the literature by exploring the discourses available to the religious, how they sought to find meaning within that setting and to deal with the hegemonic practices of religious life.

²⁶⁸ McGrath, *These women?*, p. 125.

²⁶⁹ *ibid.* p. 130.

²⁷⁰ *ibid.* p. 144.

While the need to 'rescue' the religious from obscurity, from pious sentiment and from inaccurate accounts of their lives has been recognised and the work begun, little attempt has been made towards such an undertaking in regards to the lives of lay women who spent their childhood in such settings. Educational histories have focused on the position of the child in the ideologies of the Australian education systems but little attention has been given to their experience, including the experience of children who spent their childhood in boarding schools.²⁷¹ Additionally, James Maxwell and Mary Percival Maxwell have noted that little analysis has been made of how the upper classes 'are produced over generations' and that it has been assumed that within these classes 'success is the norm, that the process is uncomplicated, that status maintenance is the outcome, and that downward mobility does not occur'.²⁷² They conclude that 'cultural and social reproduction among the upper classes . . . may be as problematic as it is at the lower levels'.²⁷³ Mary McDougall Gordon in her historiographic review of Australian histories of childhood also comments on the concentration on ideology in many of these histories, a concentration which ignores the likelihood that children and childhood have influenced adults and society.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ See Susan Mary Tobin, *Welcoming the children: Catholic boarding schools and institutions*, written for the *Conference of Catholic Education Queensland*, Brisbane, Conference of Catholic Education, Queensland, 1987. One chapter in this brief history covers boarding schools and refers mainly to the difficult physical conditions of what she terms a 'heroic effort' without which 'large numbers of children throughout the state would have had little contact with certain aspects of their religion'. Tobin, p. viii. A similar, though more comprehensive overview of Australian Catholic boys' boarding schools is contained in Francis Burns, *Catholic boarding schools for boys in Victoria, 1878-1985: the historical circumstances of their origins, their place in Catholic education and their changing role*, M.Ed. Thesis, University of New England, 1987. This history focuses on the social and educational circumstances which led to the establishment of these schools and the formal structure of the schools. No attempt was made in this history to incorporate the experiences of those who attended them.

²⁷² James D. Maxwell & Mary Percival Maxwell, 'The reproduction of class in Canada's elite independent schools', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1995, p. 323.

²⁷³ *ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Mary McDougall Gordon, 'Australia and New Zealand', in Joseph M. Hawes & N. Ray Hiner (eds), *Children in historical and comparative perspective: an international handbook and research guide*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1991, p. 101. For general accounts of the history of childhood in Australia, see Penelope Hetherington, 'Childhood and youth in Australia', *Journal of*

Additionally, she notes that it should not be assumed that the middle class 'is a homogeneous group with identical interests and goals'.²⁷⁵ Janet McCalman has provided a substantial contribution to exploration of the experience of growing up middle class in Australia.²⁷⁶ Her history is based on the experience of individuals and allows the voices of those involved to hold a position of authority within the text. However, there remains a need to look more specifically at the educational experience of children of the upper classes and to analyse the construction of those experiences. The work outlined by Maxwell and Maxwell calls for attention to be given to the experience of individuals within such settings.

Finkelstein has argued that until the end of the 1980s there was a tendency for historians of education to 'explain the evolution of new forms of popular schooling strictly in relation to the centralizing tendencies of modern life'.²⁷⁷ Such attention has, she argues, 'obscured the full complexity of relationships between material and symbolic forms, micro and macro structures, and thus between teachers and the communities in which they served'.²⁷⁸ Writing in 1992, she continued to argue for an approach to educational history which considers education as something 'experienced as well as planned' and to explore the inner individual processes which lead to the shaping of consciousness.²⁷⁹ The work of this thesis offers an initial exploration into methods of undertaking this work by addressing the interaction of dominant

Australian Studies, no. 18, 1986, pp. 3-18 and Jan Kociumbas, *Australian childhood: a history*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1997.

²⁷⁵ *ibid.* pp. 100-101.

²⁷⁶ Janet McCalman, *Journeyings: the biography of a middle-class generation 1920-1990*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1993.

²⁷⁷ Finkelstein, *Governing the young*, p. 6. In 1984 Finkelstein completed a review of ways in which children have been incorporated into the history of education. At that time she acknowledged that some historians were beginning to pay attention to children as a 'dynamic element . . . in whom and through whom culture, if it is to persist, will have to be mediated'. Barbara Finkelstein, 'Literature review: incorporating children into the history of education', *The Journal of Educational Thought*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1984, p. 34.

²⁷⁸ *ibid.* p. 6.

²⁷⁹ Finkelstein, 'Educational historians', p. 288.

discourses and related hegemonic practices with the formation of consciousness within an educational setting.

A historical undertaking which raises questions about the direction which such research might take is that written by Sally Kennedy in 1985.²⁸⁰ She traces the struggle of five Catholic lay women's organisations in the 1940s and 1950s, for the recognition of women and their organisations to find a central place in the leadership of the Church. The leadership which lay women sought through these organisations suggests, according to Kennedy, that 'any assumption that lay Catholic women's lives generally echoed roles prescribed or assumed for them in their Church is ill-founded'.²⁸¹ Kennedy's work bears witness that there were a number of Catholic lay women who resisted the passive role prescribed for them by the Church, and who in the 1940s in particular, entered into battles with the hierarchy about their status within that institution. Unfortunately, these battles generally contained hollow victories and Kennedy reports that by the 1950s many of these active women had left the country or the Church.²⁸² In the subsequent period, the clergy, according to Kennedy, remained secure in their unrealistic view of women. For example, Kennedy refers to Norman Gilroy who took over as Archbishop of Sydney in 1940. She describes him as retaining an attitude towards women which was 'simplistic and was fed by a romantic, nostalgic image of Irish-Catholic womanhood'.²⁸³ By the 1950s, optimism about an active, integrated role of lay women in the Church had generally been replaced by pessimism.

Kennedy's book is not directly about Catholic education, but it does have relevance. First, it breaks open the myth that Catholic women were all

²⁸⁰ Sally Kennedy, *Faith and feminism: Catholic women's struggle for self-expression*, Sydney, Studies in the Christian Movement, 1985.

²⁸¹ *ibid.* p. x.

²⁸² *ibid.* p. xvi.

²⁸³ *ibid.* p. 208.

passive and accepting of the Church hierarchy. Second, it could be hypothesised that these women in the main would have been educated in Catholic schools where, ostensibly, the traditional role of the ideal woman would have been advanced. Yet these women were able to resist such constructions of their subjectivity and to move towards active political behaviour on their own part. This research raises the potential for exploring Catholic education as a site for the development for such activity - for exploring it as a setting in which Catholic women were able to resist the dominating discourses and to struggle towards their own meanings. In chapter five of this thesis, through exploration of the case studies reported there, it is possible to gain insight into this process as well as insight into how the children involved sought to gain a sense of agency within the predominant social order. Yet while Kennedy's work is helpful in providing some guiding questions for this research, it is outside the history of Catholic education. There is a tremendous need for historical research which explores the experience of Catholic education and the interaction of this education with the formation of the consciousness. The aim of such a history is not, in the words of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, to glorify the past, to misremember it, to excuse it, or even to always understand it but to seek the 'subversive power of a critically remembered past'.²⁸⁴

Overview

This thesis continues with a further five chapters. The following overview outlines the content of each chapter.

Chapter Two

Within this chapter, the centrality of the three sacred symbols of the Sacred Heart order and its schools, namely the Sacred Heart, St Madeleine Sophie and Mater Admirabilis is established. Discourses and related

²⁸⁴ Cited in Weaver, p. 162.

hegemonic practices associated with each symbol are identified through an analysis of the visual image of each symbol and documents relating to the social memory of the order.

Chapter Three

Within this chapter, competing discourses of educational aspirations and associated hegemonic practices are identified, particularly through examination of early writings about the school and the Plan of Studies developed by the Society for use in all their schools. Where appropriate, information gained by way of interviews is included.

Chapters Four and Five

The narratives of the religious and ex-students interviewed are written up as case studies. Within these case studies, various forms of analysis, referred to in chapter one, are used in order to identify the search for personal meaning and agency as well as the construction of subjectivity within the setting. In writing the case studies, an attempt has been made to find a balance between analysis and individual story. Links between narratives are established.

Chapter Six

This chapter provides a conclusion to the thesis by summarising major findings, offering reflection on the process of analysis used and drawing attention to areas for possible future research.

CHAPTER TWO

CONSTRUCTING SACRED SYMBOLS

In the entrance hall to Kerever Park stood a large painting entitled *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* (Figure 1) in which Saint Madeleine Sophie, the foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart, is shown speaking with a group of three Kerever Park children.¹ Madeleine Sophie is dressed in the traditional black habit worn by the religious at Kerever Park until the 1960s. Her head is surrounded by a halo and in her hands is an open book which she is showing to the children. The book contains a picture of Our Lady known as *Mater Admirabilis*. A statue of the Sacred Heart looks on from a shrine in the background. The completion of this painting, done especially for Kerever Park, is referred to in a composite letter from the children of the school, published in the 1946 edition of *Cor Unum*, the school journal of the senior school, Rose Bay Convent. The letter is addressed to 'Reverend Mother', probably referring to Mother Dorothy McGuinness, both superior of Kerever Park in the first year of its operation and superior general of the Society in Australia.

Reverend Mother told us about the picture Mother Nealis is painting especially for Kerever Park and that you have it with you in Rome. We are longing to see it and feel so proud to think it has been painted just for us, and above all proud that Our Mother General has seen it. We feel we know Mother Nealis now, for in answer to our letters to her she has written to us asking about Kerever Park and our pets - she knows them all by name; and then, too, she sent us a first copy of a little prayer book made up of her pictures and just published. Mother told us about our special picture: that in it there are three Kerever Park children speaking to Saint Madeleine Sophie, who is showing them an open book in which there is a painting of Mater Admirabilis, while on the mantelpiece is a statue of the Sacred Heart - so she said our three big devotions: the Sacred Heart, Mater Admirabilis and Saint Madeleine Sophie are shown in the picture.

¹ The picture is now missing. Mother Nealis who painted it was a Canadian member of the order who produced a number of religious paintings which depicted key religious figures in the Catholic tradition, such as Jesus and his mother Mary, in a genre which would appeal to children. See Figure 5.

We have this prayer in the Junior school now and are looking forward to saying it in front of the picture:

'Saint Madeleine Sophie
pray for us
that we may have
a true devotion to the
Sacred Heart of Jesus.
A great love for Our Lady
And a loyal steadfastness
in our Faith.'²

Each of the three devotions which the children referred to in their letter and prayer - devotion to Saint Madeleine Sophie, to Our Lady in the form of *Mater Admirabilis* and to the Sacred Heart - are what may be termed *sacred symbols* which predominate in the social memory of the order.³

Zappone, in her analysis of the meaning of sacred symbols, casts them as the 'expressions of people's deepest feelings, yearnings, attitudes, and values' which take on meaning from our experiences of living in the world and, in turn, offer meaning back to us'.⁴ Sacred symbols, according to Zappone, are located in a particular religion and are the most powerful of symbols because they are perceived as coming from human experience with the ultimate authority of God. Drawing on the work of Carl Jung and Clifford Geertz as well as that of feminist theological writers, Carol Christ and Mary Daly, Zappone argues that symbols have three characteristics. First, while they originate from the experience of one person or a group of people, as they gain a reality in the material world through image and text, the meaning attributed to them may change. Second, because religious symbols are perceived as coming from human experience with

² Juniors of Kerever Park, 'Kerever Park', *Cor Unum: the chronicle of the convents of the Sacred Heart Australia*, vol. 2, 1946, p. 95.

³ The centrality of these three symbols within the Society is also evidenced by an entry in the House Journal, kept by the religious community at Kerever Park, which noted that on the one hundred and fiftieth celebration of the foundation of the Society the children each undertook a consecration to Our Lady before pictures of the Sacred Heart, Our Lady and Saint Madeleine Sophie. Kerever Park, House journal, unpublished material, 1944-1966, Rose Bay archives, Sydney, 21 November 1950.

⁴ Katherine Zappone, *The hope for wholeness: a spirituality for feminists*, Mystic (Connecticut), Twenty Third Publications, 1991, p. 28.



Figure 1 : Sancta Magdalena Sophia.

the ultimate authority of God, they function as some of the most powerful symbols in directing 'the meaning and activity of human living'.⁵ Third, symbols are meaningful because they represent and support values that are part of the culture of a particular group. It is therefore possible for them to become meaningless and irrelevant as people's attitudes and values change.⁶ During the period in which something is considered to be a sacred symbol, myths become attached to it. Barthes defined myths as a type of speech, a model of signification, which is historically constructed and conveys a message.⁷ Myths appropriate objects, concepts or ideas in order to convey a particular message. In this process of appropriation, the historical meaning of the symbol (signifier in Barthes' terms) must recede in order to make way for that which is signified.

The signifier of myth presents it in an ambiguous way: it is at the same time meaning and form, full on one side and empty on the other. As meaning, the signifier already postulates a reading . . . the meaning is already complete, it postulates a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions. When it becomes form [myth], the meaning leaves its contingency behind it; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only the letter remains.⁸

Barthes warns that the power of myths is that they take on the guise of eternal truths through becoming naturalised and appearing to exist outside history and the acts of humans.⁹ In this way, the message is conveyed powerfully and immediately.

As Zappone suggests, symbols come from human experience, yet they have also been shaped by those who followed on from the originators of

⁵ *ibid.* p. 29.

⁶ *ibid.* pp. 28-29.

⁷ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, selected and translated by Annette Lavers, London, Vintage, 1993 (1975), pp. 109-110.

⁸ *ibid.* p. 117.

⁹ *ibid.* p. 143.

these symbols. As discussed in the previous chapter, social memory in its various forms, such as images, artefacts and reconstructions of past events and epic heroes, serves the purpose of ordering relationships, attitudes and interests which are central in the formation of subjectivity.¹⁰ Hence, as sacred symbols are the key component of social memory within religious orders, their historical construction may be studied in order to determine the underlying discourses and hegemonic practices which are associated with them. In this chapter, I seek to establish these three sacred symbols, the Sacred Heart, Madeleine Sophie and Mater Admirabilis, as being central in the ideology of the order and its schools, to explore the historical construction of these symbols thereby identifying embedded discourses and associated hegemonic practices. In undertaking this exploration, I will draw upon texts which were in use within the Society in Australia in the period surrounding the operation of Kerever Park.¹¹

The Sacred Heart

In the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting, a statue of the Sacred Heart overviews the interaction between Madeleine Sophie and the Kerever Park children. The statue is one of Jesus dressed in flowing garments covering his body except his head and hands. In the centre of his chest is an exposed heart encircled by a ring of thorns with a cross on top of it. Both the head of Jesus and his heart are surrounded by a halo effect. In the Society of the Sacred Heart, this symbol of Jesus (Figure 2), with his heart exposed and surrounded by flames and a ring of thorns, provided a core sacred symbol, as expressed in the Plan of the Institute.

IV- The object of this Society is, therefore, to glorify the Sacred Heart of Jesus, by labouring for the salvation and perfection of its members through the imitation of the virtues of which this

¹⁰ Alan Radley, 'Artefacts, memory and a sense of the past', in David Middleton & Derek Edwards (eds), *Collective remembering*, London, Sage, 1990, p. 56.

¹¹ In seeking to locate the texts which were in used by the Society in Australia during this period, that is in the period before and during the operation of Kerever Park, I have been greatly assisted by the archivists at Rose Bay Convent, Sister Leila Barlow and Sister Marie Kennedy.

Divine Heart is the centre and model, and by consecrating its members as far as it is possible for persons of their sex, to the sanctification of others, as the work dearest to the Heart of Jesus. The Society proposes to honour with particular devotion the most Holy Heart of Mary, which was so perfectly conformed in everything to the adorable Heart of Jesus her Divine Son.¹²

There are three key elements in this aim: the Divine Heart of Jesus as the ultimate model, working for the sanctification of others, and devotion to Mary. These elements may be viewed as hierarchical, with the ideal of Christ as the pinnacle, followed by working for others but in a biologically determined way, and conformity to the model of Mary as the base. The *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting also reflects this hierarchy, with the enshrined statue of the Sacred Heart overseeing Madeleine Sophie as the ideal model of a spiritual woman working for the sanctification of others. At the base of the picture is Mary represented by Mater Admirabilis which the children come forth to view. While three discrete elements may be identified within the painting and the aims of the Society, the elements do not stand in isolation from each other. Rather, they are interdependent and all symbols provide discourses which were fundamental in the ideology of the Society and ultimately of its schools.

A key point contained in the aims of the Society is the 'imitation of Christ'. Metaphor, according to Ricoeur, plays a crucial role in the ongoing search to discover what it means to be human, with symbols and text testifying to humanity's 'effort to exist and desire to be'.¹³ The symbol of the Sacred Heart expressed this search. Metaphor may be identified as a 'split reference,' 'a kind of mistake . . . taking one thing for another by a

¹² Society of the Sacred Heart, *The Constitutions and rules of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, Roehampton, 1928, *closed document*, *Rose Bay archives*, Sydney, pp. 5-7. Only members of the Society are permitted to read this document in its entirety. I was given two sections of it: the Abridged Plan of the Institute and the Rules of the Mistress of Studies for my research.

¹³ Erin White, 'Between suspicion and hope: Paul Ricoeur's vital hermeneutic', *Journal of Literature and Theology*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1991, p. 312.



Figure 2 : The Sacred Heart.

sort of 'calculated error'.¹⁴ It maintains a tensive quality between two symbols, an 'is - is not' tension. In bringing two symbols together in this way, metaphor destroys symbolic order to create a new one and thereby redescribes reality.¹⁵ Using this criterion, the symbol of the Sacred Heart is metaphoric in that both words rub up against each other, cancelling each other out. For example, in regards to the symbol of the Sacred Heart, we can seek a meaning of the symbol by turning first to our objective knowledge of the physiological function of the heart and then to knowledge of the sacred, and subsequently trying to bring the two together, but ultimately such attempts are unsatisfactory.¹⁶ Metaphor can only be understood if the sharp division between the subjective (sacred) and the objective (heart) is broken down and if we come to see it as poetic language which expresses something of our inner life which exists at the emotive level.¹⁷ To appropriate the meaning of 'Sacred Heart' one needs to know something about the function of the heart, and something about love which is beyond literal explanation. As Erin White expresses it in her analysis of Ricoeur's hermeneutic, 'the interaction between the inner and outer gives rise to a "world" or a referent that only poetic language can express'.¹⁸

'Symbols,' writes Ricoeur, 'give rise to an endless exegesis.'¹⁹ The work

14 Paul Ricoeur, *The rule of metaphor: multidisciplinary studies of the creation of meaning and language*, translated by Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin & John Costello, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978 (1975), p. 21.

15 *ibid.* p. 22.

16 Williams tries to do this. See Margaret Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart: history of a spirit, 1800-1975*, London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978, pp. 21-22.

17 Ricoeur's understanding of metaphor as providing a reality which cannot be fully articulated is reminiscent of Bartlett's notion of initial 'attitude', which operates at the emotive level, the construction of memory which follows serving to justify this initial impression. See John Shotter, 'The social construction of remembering and forgetting', in Middleton & Edwards, p. 122. Ricoeur argues that all speech which seeks to break old categorisation is really metaphor. See Ricoeur, pp. 101-133. He also wrote metaphorically on this function: 'The power of metaphor would be to break an old categorization, in order to establish new logical frontiers on the ruins of their forerunners.' Ricoeur, p. 197.

18 In my explanation of metaphor here, I draw on White, pp. 314-315.

19 Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation theory: discourse and the surplus of meaning*, Fort Worth, The Texas Christian University Press, 1976, p. 57.

of the community, to which they relate, is to offer ongoing interpretation.²⁰ Part of this ongoing exegesis is the offering of new interpretations in response to the changing nature of society. This is not problematic, notes Ricoeur, 'as long as we live and dwell within it in the naiveté of the first certainty. Tradition only becomes problematic when this first naiveté is lost. Then we have to retrieve its meaning through and beyond estrangement.'²¹ Fentress and Wickham argue that while there is a high degree of tenaciousness and stability at the core level of shared meanings and remembered images,²² there is also a tendency in the process of ongoing interpretation to suppress or interpolate what seems to be more in keeping with a particular conception of the world at a particular time.²³

The history of devotion to the Sacred Heart, and therefore interpretations of its meanings, began well before the time of Madeleine Sophie. Williams provides a brief review of the origins of the devotion, referring to evidence of it in the Middle Ages and naming the seventeenth century as the 'Golden Age of the devotion'.²⁴ The Jesuits, according to Williams, took on the devotion, which stressed attention to the 'inward "states" of the God-man [Jesus], his dispositions, thoughts and feelings'.²⁵ In the seventeenth century, Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690), a Visitandine mystic instigated, through her visions, forms of devotion which would become almost synonymous with the devotion, focusing on adoration of the heart of Jesus and reparation for the sins of the world: 'the Holy Hour, the First Friday, the nine promises, the passion-centred reparation and, above all, the appeal of love for love'.²⁶ Her visions, according to Williams, brought a new energy to the symbol which was maintained in

20 Paul Ricoeur, *The rule of metaphor*, p. 188.

21 Ricoeur, *Interpretation theory*, p. 44.

22 David Fentress & Chris Wickham, *Social memory*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992, pp. 58-59.

23 *ibid.* pp. 85-86.

24 Williams, p. 23.

25 *ibid.*

26 *ibid.* pp. 23-24.

the late eighteenth century when the suppression of the Church during the French Revolution seems to have heightened the devotion.²⁷ Williams notes that Sacred Heart badges were worn by some of the Catholic counter-revolutionaries. The badges were embroidered with an image of Jesus and with the words: 'Cease, the Heart of Jesus is with me.'²⁸ It seems that this passionate symbol provided a counter-balance to the fierceness of the suppression of the Church during this time, the period in which Madeleine Sophie lived her early life.

What is considered to be Madeleine Sophie's own understanding of the devotion was referred to in a private edition of her writings, published by the Society in 1900 and reproduced by Williams. In this extract, in keeping with the elusive nature of metaphor, Madeleine Sophie employed poetic language to offer her understanding of the symbol. In her reference to Christ as the suffering figure who gave up his life in the name of love, a discourse of love expressed through sacrifice and suffering is engaged. However, her reference to 'the mysteries of love held in that adorable Heart' introduces another discourse which is celebratory: a discourse of mysterious and ineffable love. In this extract, the two discourses remain in tension with each other and it is only when the sharp division between the discourse of love expressed through sacrifice and suffering, which is somehow objective and understandable, and the discourse of mysterious and ineffable love, which is subjective and beyond understanding, is held together that we can somehow 'sense' the meaning.²⁹ In this way, Madeleine Sophie's definition remains metaphoric.

First of all, you know that the devotion to the Sacred Heart goes back to the first centuries of the Church; the Holy Fathers speak of

²⁷ *ibid.* p. 24.

²⁸ *ibid.* See also Donald Cave, 'The pedagogical traditions of the religious of the Sacred Heart in France and Australia', in Imelda Palma (ed.), *Melbourne Studies in Education*, Melbourne, University of Melbourne Press, 1985, p. 40.

²⁹ Williams argues that the symbol of the Sacred Heart contains two central Church dogmas: Incarnation (God made 'man') and Redemption (Christ's life offered up to redeem the sins of the world). The two discourses discussed here reflect both these dogmas which are ultimately about love and sacrifice. Williams, p. 23.

it in several of their writings. It is probably too that St. John at the moment when the soldier pierced the side of Our Lord to draw from it the last remaining drops of blood, understood from then on the mysteries of love held in that adorable Heart, and that it was from this source that he drew the divine secrets which he has handed on to us in his wonderful Apocalypse. Moreover, the worship of the Heart of Jesus must have begun at the same time as the worship of the sacred humanity of our Savior, that is, immediately after His death; but it is especially in these latter centuries that this Heart was to receive more special honor, an honor more intimate, more universal, more widespread. That is why Our Lord has spared nothing to make us know the immense love residing in this part of Himself. St. Gertrude says wonderful things about it. St. Bernard in his canticles sets our hearts on fire with love. But it is above all, as you know, the venerable Margaret Mary whom our Lord chose to be the apostle of His Heart. It was through her that He wished to manifest Himself, to make Himself known to men and to give them the greatest of graces.³⁰

These two discourses, the discourse of love expressed through sacrifice and suffering and the discourse of mysterious and ineffable love, are reflected in pictures of the Sacred Heart which show the heart of Jesus pierced by a lance (reflecting the first discourse) and flames surrounding it (reflecting the second discourse).

Madeleine Sophie was the founding superior of an order which took the Sacred Heart as its key symbol. Her interpretation could be considered to lie in what Ricoeur referred to as the 'naïveté of the first certainty'.³¹ Williams, in her life of Madeleine Sophie, writes that it was only during the period of Madeleine Sophie's life that a 'fusion' was first made between religious life and devotion to the Sacred Heart.³² Williams also provides considerable discussion as to the background of the formation of the Society and especially the impetus for its formation which came from the Fathers of the Sacred Heart.³³

³⁰ Conférences de la Vénérable Mère Madeleine Sophie Barat, Roehampton, Private edition, 1900, cited in Margaret Williams, *Saint Madeleine Sophie: her life and letters*, New York, Herder & Herder, 1965, pp. 442-443.

³¹ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, p. 44.

³² Williams, *Saint Madeleine Sophie*, p. 36.

³³ *ibid.* See Chapter four.

Examination of texts which were used by the Society in the period of Kerever Park reveals that understanding in the twentieth century had become problematic as members of the Society sought to find meaning within the symbol which was in keeping with the social order of the Society in that period. In this examination it is possible to identify, as Fentress and Wickham suggest, both a high degree of tenaciousness and stability at the core level of shared meanings and also a tendency, in this process, to suppress or interpolate what seems to be more in keeping with a particular conception of the world at the time in which the text was written.³⁴

In contrast to Madeleine Sophie's definition, in these later texts the tensive quality of the symbol has been forfeited by a separation of the two discourses and an emphasis on the discourse of love expressed as sacrifice and suffering. This emphasis results in the discourse of mysterious and ineffable love being played in a muted key. Within these texts, the discourse of love expressed as sacrifice and suffering, often referred to as 'reparation', is employed as the central guide for members of the Society. For example, in her 1923 writing on the Society of the Sacred Heart, Janet Erskine Stuart, an English member of the order and superior general of the Society from 1911 until 1914,³⁵ employed a quotation from a Jesuit priest which focused on reparation.

The ideal such as Blessed Madeleine Sophie must have seen it, was very happily expressed by a Father of the Society of Jesus . . . He said that for all the sorrows and sufferings of our Lord's life on earth and in His Passion, some special reparation and compensation was owed to Him and was made; and that the sufferings of His Sacred Heart, the little response that His love had met with, were made up to Him by a living guard of honour, a company that would devote itself to that Sacred Heart, and bear Its

³⁴ Fentress & Wickham, pp. 85-86.

³⁵ When Janet Erskine Stuart visited Australia and New Zealand in the period of 1913-1914, she was the first superior general of the Society to do so. There would not be a subsequent visit by a superior general for fifty years. Leila Barlow, *Living stones: Convent of the Sacred Heart, Rose Bay, 1882-1982*, Sydney, Kincoppal-Rose Bay School, 1982, p. 65.

name, and be Its very own, entirely consecrated to It, and serve It for love; each member for all the days of her life.³⁶

It is only on the next page, when she refers to 'those unsearchable riches of the love of God which is in Jesus Christ', that Erskine Stuart extends this definition to bring in the discourse of mysterious and ineffable love.³⁷

In a latter section of Erskine Stuart's book, the metaphoric quality is abandoned altogether and instead the discourse of love expressed as sacrifice and suffering is offered as the only way into experiencing the ineffable love of God.

This form of devotion is by far the most widely spread; it is that of which Saint Margaret Mary was so faithful a disciple, into which she entered with such a gift of intimacy enhanced by the continuous sufferings of her own life, which seemed to give her right of entrance into the sanctuary of pain, and to carry her deeper into its mysteries than most would dare or be able to follow.³⁸

In another section, Erskine Stuart touches on the obedient and sacrificial lives of many of the early members of the Society and concludes that the 'authentic mark' of one who belongs to the Society is:

an insatiable desire to give themselves to the utmost, for the glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, according to the spirit and Rule of the Society; a virtue which we call, perhaps in a colloquial sense 'devotedness,' an uncalculating spirit of sacrifice, and with it a fixed resolution to give and to suffer for the sake of love alone.³⁹

Erskine Stuart's reference to obedience to the Rule of the Society is made more explicit by Agnes Barry, an American member of the order. In the 1950s, Barry wrote a small booklet on Madeleine Sophie which was used as a guide in religious life by members of the order. In this book, her

³⁶ Janet Erskine Stuart, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, Roehampton, Convent of the Sacred Heart, 1923, p. 53.

³⁷ *ibid.* p. 54.

³⁸ *ibid.* p. 55.

³⁹ *ibid.* p. 114.

reference to the symbol contains the metaphoric element of the two discourses but the power of the metaphor is interrupted by reference to a new discourse: a discourse of conformity and obedience to those in authority. As with Erskine Stuart, Barry employs the words of a priest to define this central devotion of the order. She also uses the life of Madeleine Sophie to illustrate what she considers to be the centrality of this discourse in the ideology of the Society. She begins her text with reference to Madeleine Sophie's conformity to God in her childhood and adolescence. No reference is made to the human construction of this conformity at the hands of her older brother who became a priest while she was still a child and who subjected her to a harsh regime of study and spiritual practices. While Barry may claim that it was God whom Madeleine Sophie conformed to, writings about her life, to be discussed in the next section, reveal that it was her brother to whom she conformed as a child. In this extract, Madeleine Sophie is historically constructed only in reaction to Jansenism. The unstated implication here is that acceptance of the will of Madeleine Sophie's brother was synonymous with compliance with the will of God, just as the words of the priest, in defining the notion of the Sacred Heart, are taken as definitive. We may perhaps read into this text the belief that, as the words came from a priest so were they too synonymous with words from God.

Living as she [Madeleine Sophie] did in the years of the strong reaction against Jansenism, she was very sure of God's love for her and she gave Him all that she had in return - herself. She conformed herself to Him in her own childhood and girlhood, and so was ready to form others to His likeness in the long years of her apostolate. There is no true devotion to the Sacred Heart without this conformity, and it is this that Father Bainvel describes when he says: "It consists of a life wholly united to that loving Heart of Jesus so as to feel what He feels, to will what He wills, to love what He loves, to please Him by doing what He desires . . . a life wholly of love and of loving reparation. To love the Divine Heart that has loved us so much that thirsts to be loved; to render it love for love"40

40 Agnes Barry, *Saint Madeleine Sophie: foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart*, New York, Manhattanville College, c. 1950, p. 6.

In the latter part of the booklet, Barry supports her interpretation of the symbol by introducing a letter written by Madeleine Sophie. In this letter the foundress admonishes the religious, to whom she was writing, to sacrifice 'yourself on all occasions' and to work and suffer 'without consolation'.⁴¹ The letter concludes with a reference to the ideal spiritual woman who practises the 'virtues' of: 'gentleness, sweetness, serenity, evenness of disposition, complete and sincere submission to every Superior, always in imitation of Our Lord who should be your example and model'.⁴² In another section, Barry takes a quotation from the writings of Father Varin, who was responsible for Madeleine Sophie becoming the foundress of the order. In this extract, Varin stresses that suffering is the 'appropriate and proper lot of those who devote themselves to the Sacred Heart' and the only way to imitate Jesus.⁴³

A similar focus on the discourse of suffering was also made central in a book published in 1952 called *The Sacred Heart in Modern Life*.⁴⁴ It was written by François Charmot, a Jesuit priest, and was used by religious of the Sacred Heart as a guide to understanding their devotion to this symbol. Here, Charmot argues that the discourse of love expressed as sacrifice and suffering is central and is exemplified by the life of Christ.

There is only one true apostolate: union in love. Whether a soul be called to a life of contemplation, of suffering, of action - there is but one vocation: to love . . . Some souls are primarily contemplative. Their first duty is prayer. Suffering and action intensify and fructify their contemplation. Others are principally victim-souls. They suffer, crucified by man and even by God. They spend themselves in the service of their neighbour, in the measure to which prayer and good works approximate their resemblance to Jesus crucified. Others are essentially "men of action": they act, and prayer and suffering add a supernatural efficacy to their dedication. But the inspiration of all

⁴¹ *ibid.* p. 41.

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ *ibid.* p. 19.

⁴⁴ François Charmot, *The Sacred Heart and modern life*, translated by Kathryn Sullivan, New York, P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1952 (1949).

these diverse lives is found in charity and in the Holy Ghost, and in so re-constituting the life of Christ, they unfold the Mystical Body of Christ.⁴⁵

Charmot also turns to the lives of various saints, including Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque 'who offered herself as a victim . . . in reparation for offences against the Heart of Jesus Christ'⁴⁶ and Saint Ignatius⁴⁷ and in each case the hallmark of their devotion is suffering. Charmot concludes 'that the active apostolate indeed makes victims'.⁴⁸

Within texts used by the religious in the period in which Kerever Park operated, it is possible to see the continuation of the central meanings associated with the symbols of the Sacred Heart as defined by Madeleine Sophie - the discourse of love expressed through sacrifice and suffering and the discourse of mysterious and ineffable love. However, it is also possible to locate, as Fentress and Wickham suggest, a tendency in these constructions to suppress or interpolate what seems to be more in keeping with a particular conception of the world at a given time.⁴⁹ What is particularly noticeable is the tendency to stress the discourse of love expressed as sacrifice and suffering and, in Barry's case, to tie the discourse of obedience and conformity to authority in with discussion of the Sacred Heart, hence reifying the discourse. In the books by Erskine Stuart and Barry, while attention is given to exploring the meaning of the Sacred Heart the vast majority of each book is given over to identifying the hegemonic practices associated with these discourses and within these writings the life of Madeleine Sophie is held up as being the model of these discourses in practice.

⁴⁵ *ibid.* pp. 111-112.

⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 133.

⁴⁷ *ibid.* p. 119.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Fentress & Wickham, pp. 85-86.

Saint Madeleine Sophie

The inclusion of the painting of Madeleine Sophie in the foyer of Kerever Park is witness to the importance placed on this saint as a guide for life within the Society. Kennedy has documented that while Catholic lay women were described in Catholic periodicals in the 1940s and 1950s 'as guardians in the home and of the nation, this was mere rhetoric'.⁵⁰ In reality, it was the religious who were considered by the clergy to be most suitable in the important role of educating the rising generation of Catholics - not the mothers.⁵¹ Within these teaching orders, such as the Society of the Sacred Heart, the founding saint provided the ultimate symbol of the ideal spiritual woman and mother.

In the 1956 hymn book used at Kerever Park and other Australian schools run by the Society, there are two hymns dedicated to Madeleine Sophie. In both hymns, the children pray to her to guide them. The chorus of the first hymn is as follows:

Blessed Mother, Sainted Mother
guide thy children on their way
Till at last they stand around thee
Radiant in eternal day.⁵²

The second hymn concludes as follows:

Saint and Mother, lead thy children
There, where seraph-voices raise
Lofty hymn of deep thanksgiving,
Glorious song of fullest praise.
Laud and honour to the Father,
To the all-redeeming Son,
To the sanctifying Spirit,

⁵⁰ Sally Kennedy, *Faith and feminism: Catholic women's struggle for expression*, Sydney, Studies in the Christian Movement, 1985, p. xiv.

⁵¹ *ibid.* p. xv.

⁵² Society of the Sacred Heart, *Hymns for the use of the children of the Sacred Heart*, 2nd Australian ed., Sydney, Rose Bay, 1956, p. 96.

While unending ages run.

*Sancta Sophia, ora pro nobis.*⁵³

While devotion to the Sacred Heart was the ultimate goal of the order, Madeleine Sophie provided the model for how this devotion was to be lived out.

Throughout the twenty-two year period in which the school operated (1944-1965), a House Journal was kept by the community. The task of keeping this journal was rotated, roughly on a yearly basis, amongst the religious community although no name was attached to any entry. Examination of this journal reveals the significance of religious feast days for both the religious and the school community. The feast days of Saint Madeleine Sophie, the Sacred Heart and those associated with Our Lady, as well as feast days associated with the liturgical year of the Church, such as Easter, provided the major focus. For example, a journal entry notes that when the children came back to school from the holidays 'they received Our Lord's welcome in our tiny chapel and had their devotions to Saint Madeleine Sophie'.⁵⁴ Madeleine Sophie's feast day was celebrated throughout all Sacred Heart schools including Kerever Park. This day was lesson free and celebrated with special games and food. An entry in the House Journal notes that on her feast day her picture 'was placed in the chapel and decorated'.⁵⁵

The letter quoted in the previous section from the juniors of Kerever Park to Mother McGuinness in Rome includes a reference to a play about Saint Madeleine Sophie that the children had presented to the mistress general (the school principal) on her feast day. In the letter, the play was referred to as 'the Wishing'. This term is interesting and may be interpreted as 'wishing a happy feast day', but may also be interpreted as an aspiration: 'may you/we be like Saint Madeleine Sophie'. Whatever

⁵³ *ibid.* p. 97.

⁵⁴ House journal, 3 June 1946.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* 25 April 1946.

the interpretation, the painting, the play and the hymns bear witness to the emphasis placed on Madeleine Sophie within the school. A House Journal entry in 1960 reveals the continuing emphasis on Madeleine Sophie. In this case, note was made of scenes of the saint's life being acted out by the children on her feast day.⁵⁶ Her life was continually placed before the children as a guide for life. This guide was even stronger for the religious.

When women joined the order, they spent much of their time in the novitiate learning about the history of the order, which included the life of Madeleine Sophie and her spirituality; but even after this early training period she was not forgotten. In the interviews with the religious from Kerever Park, they reported that during community reading time⁵⁷ they often read, sometimes in French, the lives of the 'mothers'. These were stories written by members of the Society about the lives of various members, including the life of Madeleine Sophie. The story of her life became an important carrier for messages about the most appropriate way for a religious to behave. For example, one document, although written after the period of Kerever Park, exemplifies how messages about appropriate behaviour were tied in to her life story.

The document is a series of meditations to be completed in the month prior to her birthday, on December 12th. These meditations focus on what Madeleine Sophie considered to be the five virtues of religious life: lively faith, contempt of the world, humility, modesty and simplicity.⁵⁸ These designated characteristics were then followed with points for daily meditation. These five virtues are included in the Constitutions of the order and in the various biographies about her she becomes an exemplary

⁵⁶ *ibid.* 1 May 1960.

⁵⁷ This was time the religious community spent together each day as a form of recreation. Often a book would be read while the religious darned, sewed or completed some form of manual handwork including peeling vegetables if they were a coadjutrix sister, who undertook the domestic work but who did not teach.

⁵⁸ Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, p. 56.

model of the practice of these virtues. An example of how the story of Madeleine Sophie's contempt of the world was linked to the fostering of particular behaviours, notably rejection of self-esteem, being thankful for what the Society provided, generosity, and lack of possessiveness, is contained in the following extract.

2. Contempt of the world

Nov. 25th: O God, we are the spouses of Jesus Christ humbled, poor and crucified. Give us a contempt of any sign of worldly esteem and ambition.

Nov. 26th: O God, listen to the desires of our hearts to be poor as Jesus was poor. We thank you for the material comforts that our Society so lovingly provides for us.

Nov. 27th: O God, give us a love of abjection, humiliation and poverty. Root out from our hearts any signs of possessiveness.

Nov. 28th: O God, we thank you for the many gifts you have given us. Give us generosity of heart which will lead us to share what we enjoy, with others.⁵⁹

The behaviours fostered within this document - a love of God, contempt of the world, humility, modesty and simplicity - were essential aspects of the way of life of the Society and flowed from the central discourses of the ineffable love of God, love expressed as sacrifice and suffering, and conformity and obedience to those in authority. Biographies of Madeleine Sophie's life also carried similar messages.

The Young Madeleine Sophie

A substantial number of biographies for both adults and children have

⁵⁹ Society of the Sacred Heart, Preparation for St Madeleine Sophie's Birthday, 12th December, Kerever Park, unpublished material, 1979, held by Christine Trimmingham Jack. This document is dated 1979 after the closure of Kerever Park. It was found in one of the books at Kerever Park by a religious being interviewed. She gave it to me as an example of the kind of spiritual reflection they did based on Madeleine Sophie's life.

been written about this saint.⁶⁰ In a number of writings about the young Madeleine Sophie, she is cast as being the ideal Catholic child: almost sinless and loving of God, wise beyond her years, with a happy disposition even in the face of adversity, loving of all and loved by all.

In a book published in 1925, Maud Monahan, a member of the order, describes this ideal child as revealing at an early age the makings of what is considered to be the ideal woman. Monahan's reference to her having the 'best of women's dower' reveals a biologically determined view in which women are cast as being naturally intuitive.

She was only ten, and had, what is often found in children, an instinctive realisation and consequent love of God and all things beautiful and holy, joined with an exuberant, vehement love of play. Have met with nothing but love, she was straight and true to an exceptional degree. But side by side with these childlike qualities, and in the midst of most buoyant outbursts, there was discernible an unexpected maturity of judgement, a keen power of observation, an astonishing memory, and a quite unchildlike fund of common sense, 'that master of human life,' as Boussuet described it, allied with the best of women's dower, a sure gift of intuition. Her judgements were of one much older than her age, and her home circle was amused by her criticism, from which the weak points of those around her did not escape.⁶¹

A later book published in 1953, written by Charmot, includes a description in which she was said to be devoid of any traces of pride, even though she was gifted with a number of talents. In his depiction of her as virtually sinless, he places her alongside Mary, the mother of Jesus, and well beyond feelings of anger and the fears and anxieties experienced by ordinary humanity. Within this depiction, we see the traditional construction of the ideal woman: kind, gentle, devoted, loving and universally attractive.

⁶⁰ The biographies drawn upon here were, according to the Rose Bay archivists, those found in the libraries of Rose Bay Convent and Kerever Park in the period in which the school operated.

⁶¹ Maud Monahan, *Saint Madeleine Sophie: foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart 1779-1865*, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1925, pp. 4-5. In the Australian Oxford dictionary a definition of 'dower' is: 'gift of nature, talent'. George W. Turner (ed.), *The Australian concise Oxford dictionary of current English*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 310.

was permitted to have talents as long as she did not use them for her own purposes. This view, which allowed a woman to have talents but not to use them for her own ends, is resonant of biologically determined views about women and their education which were current during Madeleine Sophie's life.

Within biographies about her life, references are made to the French Revolution and its anti-Catholic forces as being the reason behind the need for the educational work of the Society - the Society being founded in the period immediately after the Revolution. However, in terms of social history, these biographies remain almost ahistorical, especially in regards to the prevailing attitudes towards women. Madeleine Sophie grew up in the period of the French Revolution, being born in 1779 and spending her youth in Joigny, ninety miles from Paris. She also grew up in a period in which women were assigned little civic and legal power. In the decades preceding the Revolution, a woman remained under her father's legal authority until marriage, which then transferred her to her husband's authority.⁶⁵ Within marriage, a woman had no legal control over her person or property.⁶⁶

While the intellectuals of the eighteenth century such as Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau debated this subordinate position and while the feminist cause was taken up by now obscure writers, the positioning of women within a biologically determined view which placed them as naturally belonging within the home, marriage and motherhood was employed in different terms by both feminists and anti-feminists. Jane Abrey, in her review of feminism during the French Revolution, states that: 'While the supporters of feminism tended to exalt marriage and motherhood as a claim on society, the anti-feminists used this same "natural vocation" to prove that women should be content to stay home

⁶⁵ Jane Abrey, 'Feminism in the French Revolution', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 80, no. 1, 1975, p. 44.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

As a child she was distinguished from girls of her age by the natural virtues which the Holy Spirit had already transfigured in her by grace: a penetrating intelligence, which, without effort, discerned the hidden grain of truth in everything, a natural balance of gifts that made her excel in everything, without shining in anything particular, for the genius (which was certainly hers) did not consist in the development of one gift at the expense of others, but appeared in a certain perfection of nature almost unspoilt by original sin. Finally, she had above all, qualities of the heart: kindness, gentleness, devotedness; in short, charity in every form, which made her universally lovable and attractive. The beauty and greatness of her life were to spring from the magnificent development of this exquisite flower.⁶²

Erskine Stuart, while not quite claiming that she was sinless, also describes the young Madeleine Sophie as the ideal child. As in the extract from Charmot, we see the makings of the ideal woman, with an addition of a capacity for 'persevering in work'. Erskine Stuart wrote extensively about education, including the book: *The Education of Catholic Girls*.⁶³ The addition of the discourse of 'perseverance in work' and the suggestion that she was able to accept reprimand may be seen to reflect Erskine Stuart's construction of the ideal Catholic school child.

Sensitive, receptive, happy, generous, never at a loss for a reply, turning her phrases neatly, quick in observation, helpful and ready of hand, persevering in work but full of playful brightness, prompt to rebound after constraint, and easily exhilarated, she grew up noble and simple of soul, loving in disposition, clinging as her own vines, and hardy as they to bear the sharp pruning of trials and losses that the events of the times brought upon her life.⁶⁴

In these last two extracts, a tension is created between being gifted and being humble. Erskine Stuart refers to it as 'noble and simple', while Charmot expresses it as 'a natural balance of gifts that made her excel in everything, without shining in anything particular'. It is as though she

⁶² François Charmot, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, no place of publication indicated, 1949, p. 12.

⁶³ Janet Erskine Stuart, *The education of Catholic girls*, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1911.

⁶⁴ Erskine Stuart, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, p. 6.

and to obey their husbands.⁶⁷ The writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau had become particularly popular with women and his glorification of the role of women as home-makers and mothers undermined any feminist demands for equality.⁶⁸

Abray points out that, while feminists made education their most important rallying point, a view supported by their opponents, any educational reforms suggested by the various revolutionary governments included sharp distinctions between the kind of education suitable for each sex. For example, Talleyrand agreed that both sexes must be educated, but his *Projet de Décret* reflected the view that would subsequently be followed in educational reforms: 'All lessons taught in the public schools will aim particularly to train girls for the virtues of domestic life and to teach them skills useful in raising a family.'⁶⁹ The outcome of the revolutionary period was to reinforce the position of women within the home.

Rebecca Rogers, in her work on girls' secondary education in post-revolutionary France, concludes that the long-term legacy of this period was an education system which was 'serious but non-vocational'.⁷⁰ Education was designed to train women for their domestic role, not for public life. Inherent in this view is a belief that a woman, as Charmot and Erskine Stuart suggest in their writings about Madeleine Sophie, may have talents as long as she does not use them for her own purposes, beyond contributions to family life. As it will be demonstrated in the next chapter of this thesis, the educational work of the Society at the time of Kerever Park maintained this view.

⁶⁷ *ibid.* p. 45.

⁶⁸ *ibid.* pp. 45-46.

⁶⁹ *ibid.* pp. 52-53.

⁷⁰ Rebecca Rogers, 'Competing visions of girls' secondary education in post-revolutionary France', *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1994, p.170.

Madeleine Sophie was unusual, given these negative attitudes towards women's intellectual development. She received an extensive education, of a type usually confined to boys. This education came from her brother, Louis Barat, eleven years her senior, who became a priest in his early adult life. Her education is described in every story of her life and is generally considered to be extremely significant in forming her capacity to lead the educational work of the Society of the Sacred Heart. The study was undertaken in isolation, under Louis' guidance, in the attic of her home. In biographies about her life, while the harshness of this regime is admitted, the associated discourse is one of sacrificing pleasure in childhood for the sake of adult formation. For example, in an Australian book written especially for children by Elinor Wren, entitled *The Peasant Girl of Joigny* published in Melbourne in 1925, the story of this harsh regime is told through a fairy tale motif in which Louis becomes the ogre and Madeleine Sophie the princess.⁷¹ The description of her home with Madeleine Sophie in the attic is reminiscent of *Rumplestiltskin* in which the princess is locked away and made to toil on almost impossible tasks. However, this princess is not rescued but learns to comply and, eventually, to realise that this has all been for her own benefit. The message here for young readers in employment of this myth is: all harsh treatment is ultimately for your own benefit and resistant feelings are to be suppressed.

Wren also includes a story about Louis' spiritual direction of Madeleine Sophie which aimed at fostering self-denial. While Wren indicates some sympathy towards the child, she concludes that the outcome of such treatment was her advanced sanctity. The message here is that the way to God is through such self-denial and suffering.

The poor girl has ample opportunity for learning self-denial. One day he burned a beautiful and fine piece of needlework which she had toiled at for hours and which she had intended to give to her

⁷¹ Elinor Wren, *The peasant girl of Joigny: Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart, 1779-1865*, Melbourne, J. Roy Stevens, 1925, pp. 13-14.

brother as a surprise present. She made a dress for herself, too, to replace the peculiar Burgundian costume that she had brought with her. Louis scorned such vanity, as he called it, and Sophie saw the dress, the many hours of careful work, and her poor foolish dreams go into the fire all together. She wept bitterly over these trials, for to a nature as sensitive as hers they were very great. But in time Sophie learnt to laugh at disappointments and sacrifices that would before have cost her many tears, and indeed these trials became so frequent that they lost their sting. . . . As time went on and Sophie advanced in sanctity she grew to bear with ease both the little crosses and the big, and even to love them. She advanced very rapidly in this love of God and human souls and was anxious to consecrate her life to God.⁷²

Another theme which emerges in these writings about her early life and which seems to have some relevance for Kerever Park was that of the connection between Madeleine Sophie's place of origin and her personal characteristics. O'Leary refers to her 'hardy qualities' and her ability to cope with adversity as being associated with 'the race from which she sprang'.⁷³ Erskine Stuart makes a similar claim.

This child of the Burgundian country-side had something in her blood that fitted her for carrying out a great enterprise. Simplicity, hardihood, and high spirit were nurtured in its vineyards and farmlands; something that lifted the soul easily to magnanimous thoughts and deeds . . . The influence of climate and country cannot fail to impress itself strongly on the whole being of a child, especially when families are bound by their way of living to the land, and remain for generations in the same place, giving it time to tell. Our homeless manner of modern life is effacing types and characteristics and tending to a level of uniformity in language and thought, even in expression of countenance, that involves the loss of many precious features of character. But, in the time when Blessed Madeleine Sophie was growing up in the sun of her father's vineyard and the shadow of her garret study, Burgundy gave an accent to the whole being which was unmistakable.⁷⁴

These texts imply that there is something unadulterated about coming from a country background. It is as though, as Erskine Stuart suggested,

⁷² *ibid.* pp. 34-35

⁷³ Mary O'Leary, *Education with a tradition: an account of the educational work of the Society of the Sacred Heart*, London, University of London Press, 1936, p. xix.

⁷⁴ Erskine Stuart, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, pp. 5-6.

city life corrupts but country life allows for the natural development of all that is good. This view echoes Rousseau's idea of the naturally good child who, when educated away from the corrupting influences of society, will develop personal characteristics strong enough to resist the corruption of society. This is an interesting theme when consideration is given to Kerever Park as a country school which was populated by many city children as well as those from the country. There, a simple life for the children, devoid of money, outside influences in the form of radio, television and unsuitable books, and allowing few personal possessions including toys, was fostered.⁷⁵ Perhaps these beliefs were embedded in Rousseauian ideas, which were current at the time of Madeleine Sophie.⁷⁶ Certainly, the construction of the early life of Madeleine Sophie gives rise to a discourse about education removed from city life which allows the fostering of simplicity, devotion to God, and willingness to take on and accept hard work. It is possible that such discourses operated, perhaps unconsciously, in the mind of Mother Dorothy McGuinness who founded Kerever Park.

Erskine Stuart's reference, in the above extract, to the sunshine of the vineyard and the shadow of the garret, resonates with a theme discussed in chapter four of this thesis, which is strong in many of the narratives of the religious who were at Kerever Park: the contrast between the freedom

⁷⁵ S.B. 25 October 1995. Interview one. This religious stated: 'I was very struck by the aim to make it a very simple life down there [at Kerever Park]. When they would come back from holidays each term, and especially at the beginning of the year, they would often bring quite elaborate pencil cases and all kinds of gimmicks with them and very gently these were extracted from them and put in the little black cupboard under the staircase in the convent and they would each be given one exercise book, one pencil or pen and one rubber and of course a ruler and maybe coloured pencils as well . . . It was almost like a religious . . . I think it might go back to Madeleine Sophie because in the beginning she had people from the upper classes in society, titled people, and they would often be very worldly. She wanted to get rid of that worldly element although she was preparing them to take their place in society, but she wanted to stop that sense of worldliness and looking down on others who didn't have as much. I think it stemmed from that.'

⁷⁶ The inclusion by Williams of the following quotation from Madeleine Sophie's own writings suggests that Madeleine Sophie was probably aware of Rousseau's educational ideas: 'Yet the best of what has been written on the subject for women is now used up. I have read everything about it, at least in what is essential and reasonable'. Williams, *Saint Madeleine Sophie*, pp. 465-466.

of life outside the house and the restriction of life inside. The teaching religious reported finding the regime of work and lifestyle imposed upon them extremely onerous. As a semi-enclosed order, they were confined to the property except for visits to the dentist or deployment to another convent. Visitors were restricted to a one hour visit. They were required to engage in at least five hours of prayer per day and to sing the Little Office of Mary three times a day. Monastic silence was part of the lifestyle and the religious were allowed to speak only in order to fulfil their duties or at the two short recreation periods per day. In these recreation periods, the religious sat in a semi-circle in order of date of profession and level of authority. All conversation was directed through the mother superior rather than having an open format which allowed spontaneous interaction amongst the group. Particular friendships were forbidden and the onus was on the religious to confess any breaking of the rules during the regular general confession held in front of the gathered religious community. They engaged in monastic acts of mortification which included food restrictions at certain times and denial of personal comfort especially in the way of heating. The cold climate both outside the house and within it, the demands of never having a moment to themselves, of constantly being with the children, preparing for classes, or undertaking hard physical work if they were coadjutrix sisters, coupled with the loneliness which came from the lack of personal relationships, presented a demanding and at times overwhelming way of life. Yet counterbalanced against this was the enjoyment the religious reported taking from the countryside and the gardens which surrounded the school. Here they found pleasure and momentary freedom. The narratives of the religious, discussed in chapter four, bear witness to the pleasure they took from the beauty of the natural environment and the gardens and it was often in this setting that they engaged in personal prayer. Within the school buildings, the discourse of love expressed as sacrifice and suffering dominated. Outside they were able to experience the discourse of mysterious and ineffable love.

In depictions of Madeleine Sophie's early life, it is possible to see the fundamentals of the traditional notion of the ideal woman: gentle, loving, kind, devoted and hard-working. Her background as a country child provided a vehicle for suggestion that she was unadulterated, or in Charmot's words, 'almost without original sin'. Schwartz argues that epic heroes are constructed in order to remind people of ideals rather than of actual conduct and feeling.⁷⁷ As the ideal child, Madeleine Sophie was obedient, endured harsh treatment, being concerned only with the love of God, and generally was exempt from the resistant emotions and behaviour of an ordinary child. When harshness is acknowledged, it is explained as part of character formation and accepted for the sake of adulthood. As demonstrated by Wren's children's book, stories of the young Madeleine Sophie were constructed for young children. They included her rare capacity to learn demanding subjects, her 'humble' background, her precocious capacity to love God so intensely from an early age and her obedience, especially in completing her work. In this depiction, she became a model well beyond the capacity of the normal child, yet she was also used as a mechanism for control: children needed to recognise that they were receiving an education which was for their own good - in return, being obedient was all that was required of them.

Madeleine Sophie as Foundress of the Society

In stories about the foundation of the order, Madeleine Sophie's acquiescence in accepting what she believed was asked of her, especially by God through the various priests in her life, and her humility in not wanting to be seen as important in the development of the Society is stressed. In these stories, the personal characteristic of humility sits beside the power which a variety of priests exercised over Madeleine Sophie. In a number of texts, God's will becomes synonymous with the will of 'the fathers'. In this way, humility overlapped with obedience.

⁷⁷ Barry Schwartz, 'The reconstruction of Abraham Lincoln', in Middleton & Edwards, p. 98.

In writings about her life, it is said that she wanted to be a Carmelite but, when Father Joseph Varin met her, he decided that she would be the suitable foundress for a new order: the parallel female order of the Fathers of the Faith with their devotion to the Sacred Heart.⁷⁸ Her story of wishing one vocation but being directed by a priest to another is in keeping with how a number of religious who served at Kerever Park came to be members of the Sacred Heart order: they were 'directed' by a priest, usually a Jesuit to join the Society. In fact, one who, like Madeleine Sophie, also sought to be a Carmelite even though she was educated in a Sacred Heart school remembered being told by the priest whom she turned to for advice: 'You can't be a Carmelite. You have to go back to where you were educated.' The response of the young woman was acceptance: 'In those days, you were obedient.'⁷⁹

Four descriptions of the events which surrounded Madeleine Sophie being made superior of the order reveal the developing mythology of the story. They also demonstrate the will of God being conveyed through the priest and the value placed on her acceptance of this will. In keeping with Zappone's argument that challenging sacred symbols 'is often understood as confronting the power of God himself',⁸⁰ an extension of this is a belief that challenging the will of a priest, 'the Father', is also synonymous with challenging the will of God.

Adèle Cahier's two volume life of Madeleine Sophie is the first extensive work written on her, although it was a private edition written only for members of the Society and it remains untranslated from the French. Cahier was a contemporary and close friend of Madeleine Sophie. In her 1884 work, she used an extract from the writings of Varin himself in telling the story of Madeleine Sophie being made the first superior of the order. In this extract, the will of God is deemed as being equivalent with

⁷⁸ See Wren, p. 35 and Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, pp. 28-32.

⁷⁹ C.K. 18 March 1996. Interview one.

⁸⁰ Zappone, p. 29.

the will of the 'Father' and Madeleine Sophie's reported suffering is considered acceptable, even something to be celebrated in the light of the later good of the Society. This extract from Cahier is included in the later biography by Williams.

After mass, accompanied by Father Roger, I called the religious together. I spoke for a few minutes about Our Lord. Then I told them that I thought it would be well to question them, to judge of their aptitude for teaching others. I then questioned them successively on the catechism, one on the sacraments, one on grace. When I came to Sister Sophie I said: 'Of you, as the youngest, I shall ask the easiest question. Why did God make you and place you in the world?' The answer came at once: 'To know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him.' I continued: 'And what does that mean, to serve God?' 'It means to do His holy will.' She would have said more but I had heard enough; that was what I wanted. And so I interrupted: 'You say that to serve God is to do His holy will; I hope that you wish to serve Him?' 'Yes, Father.' 'Very well; His will is that you be superior.' At these words, as though thunderstruck, she fell on her knees, broke into tears and pleaded. But we were inflexible. I leave you to guess the feelings of this poor mother; it nearly cost her her life, especially later on when she was elected superior general. For ten years she kept begging mercy of me, but happily for her daughters she was wasting her time.⁸¹

In a second extract, taken from Erskine Stuart, she is portrayed as a frightened child and her humility in refusing to see the development of the Society as her achievement is given highest value. This portrayal echoes the tension illustrated in McGrath's history of the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta in which she reports that women religious were expected to undertake positions of leadership while remaining humble and the 'protected female virgin' in a male-run Church.⁸²

Scarcely more than a child, and frightened at the thought of anything so new and untried, she almost found in her arms, without knowing it, the Society of the Sacred Heart. The child was God's child, and the hour was God's hour; He had brought them

⁸¹ Adèle Cahier, *Vie de la Vénérable Mère Barat*, vols 1 & 2, 1884, cited in Williams, *Saint Madeleine Sophie*, pp. 63-64.

⁸² Madeleine Sophie McGrath, *These women? Women religious in the story of Australia, the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta 1888-1988*, Sydney, NSW University Press, c. 1988, p. 125.

together, and from the first moment the work was his own. He commanded it to live and grow and increase; and the foundress, never taking a step of her own accord, but waiting for the guiding hand of His Providence at each parting of the ways, *saw* it rather than made it grow. She saw it with wonder, never without fear; she was indignant as at a blasphemy when she was called a foundress; she recognized not even a founder's hand, save that of God, in its origin, though she loved and leaned with a child's trust on Father Varin in the early years, and venerated him with a daughter's grateful devotion when his active help was, before long, withdrawn. She said it would be 'horrible' to suppose that she had had any personal share in the creation of the Society which she governed. In every word and act of her administration she made it clear that she regarded it as a trust, and in no way a 'life's work,' or an effort of human invention to satisfy the 'need of the time.'⁸³

In Wren's children's book, Madeleine Sophie's voice is not heard, only that of the priest. Her life was arranged for her and she remains in the role of the good daughter: compliant and childlike. In this extract, God's will is again treated as being synonymous with that of the priest and Louis relinquishes his power to another 'father'. This role of women religious as dutiful daughters of the Church has persisted well into the twentieth century, as Weaver notes.⁸⁴

At the time she was away for her annual holidays at Joigny, but, on her return, Father Varin came to the house in the Rue de Touraine. Sophie was sent to the parlor, and we have Father Varin's own words to describe the interview: 'I found,' he says, 'a very delicate looking, very retiring, very shy girl. And yet it was upon her that God wished to raise the edifice of the Society of His Sacred Heart. Here was the grain of mustard seed that was to grow into the tree whose branches are so wide-spread.' Father Varin found in her everything that he could have desired: her education, her training in the spiritual life, her humility, her youth and character, her religious vocation - all fitted in with his ideal for the foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart.

Louis saw in this new scheme the clear indication of God's will, and he gave up to Father Varin the guidance of Sophie's soul. She found this new direction a great change and contrast to that of

⁸³ Erskine Stuart, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, p. 3.

⁸⁴ Mary Jo Weaver, *New Catholic women: a contemporary challenge to traditional religious authority*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1985, p. 73.

Louis. All harshness was removed and Father Varin taught her to love God in a simple and childlike trustfulness.⁸⁵

In Charmot's 1953 work, the event is joined to the story of the coming of the angel to Mary, announcing that she is to be the mother of Jesus. In the Bible story, Mary is at first fearful but finally acquiescent to what is asked of her: "Then Mary said: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." ⁸⁶ Madeleine Sophie is also depicted as acquiescent and, as in the extract from *Cahier*, Madeleine Sophie's suffering is again something to be celebrated for the long term good of the Society. ⁸⁷

It seems likely that Madeleine Sophie was reluctant to accept the role of superior of the Society, given that she had originally wanted to be a Carmelite and lead a fully contemplative life rather than the more open way of an order involved in education. Such demands must have been difficult for her, yet her reluctance is subsumed into the story of Mary and her ultimate acceptance and corresponding suffering viewed at minimum as acceptable and at times celebratory. Embedded within these texts is the power of the priests being tied in with the power of God, with Madeleine Sophie herself remaining powerless. What makes her exceptional, in these texts, is her compliance. The embedded discourse here is that: those in authority convey the will of God. Associated with this discourse is that of conformity and obedience to the authority.

The religious interviewed for this research all stressed that obedience was central in their order. Authority came through the superior and her will was seen as synonymous with God. There was to be no questioning of it. As one of the interviewed religious expressed it, drawing upon the writings of Thomas á Kempis whose life of Christ was read to the

⁸⁵ Wren, p. 39.

⁸⁶ Luke 1:38, *The Holy Bible, New revised standard version*, Iowa, World Bible Publishers, 1989, p. 53.

⁸⁷ Charmot, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, pp. 14-15.

community during spiritual reading: 'If you were told to water a dry stick by your superior, well water it. Miracles could happen!'⁸⁸

The Monastic Tradition

The above quotation from Thomas á Kempis reflects the influence of the monastic tradition upon the Society. In her later work on the history of the Society, Williams refers to the debt which the ideology of the Society owes to this tradition.⁸⁹

In his recent book, *The Word in the Desert*, Douglas Burton-Christie traces the influence of the Desert Fathers and the growth of monasticism in fourth-century Egypt through to modern days. He notes, among many paths, the significant influence of the desert ideal on the monastic revivals of the Middle Ages, how St Benedict exhorted his monks to read the writings of John Cassian on the desert movement and that there is evidence that *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* was well known in medieval Benedictine monasteries. The Carmelites and Capuchin Franciscans were also significantly influenced by the spirit of the desert ideal, although it was adapted to suit their way of life which was less removed from the world. Additionally, Burton-Christie notes that the source of influence on the modern world also came from unlikely places such as in the writings of Flaubert who made Antony the hero of his *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*.⁹⁰

Burton-Christie analyses in detail the nature of the spirituality of the Fathers which included the following characteristics. First, the high esteem in which they held the Scriptures which were to be used, through meditation and memorisation, to aid them 'in their battle with the

⁸⁸ E.B. 18 August 1995. Interview two.

⁸⁹ Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, pp. 20-21.

⁹⁰ Douglas Burton-Christie, *The word in the desert: scripture and the quest for holiness in early Christian monasticism*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 7-9.

demons; for healing and encouragement; for helping them to draw disparate thoughts and energies into a contemplative union'.⁹¹ Second, meditation, in conjunction with referral to the Scriptures especially the psalms; and third, manual work, was considered to be one of the foundations of monastic life. Burton-Christie refers to an incident in which a brother asks an elder how to rebuild his life after having succumbed to temptation. The elder replies: 'Meditation, psalmody, and manual work - these are the foundations.'⁹² The Desert Fathers also stressed the power of words both to heal and to destroy and therefore they valued silence as a protection from harmful use of this power, silence being considered to provide 'the fertile ground out of which words of power could grow and through which these words could bear fruit in lives of holiness'.⁹³ Another characteristic was the constant striving to root evil out of oneself especially through denial of the body, including sexuality, yet this asceticism was mediated by *penthos*, sometimes called 'the gift of tears' in which transformation is experienced through the dual experience of judgement and mercy. The life of Christ, in particular his compassion for sinners, provided the powerful source of this transformation.⁹⁴ Vigilance to prayer life, renunciation of attachment to ego and material possessions, and awareness of sinfulness and dependence on God were also critical. But above all the commandment of love was the ultimate guiding force for this way of life. In their desire to realise this commandment, they sought to be humble in relationships with others, struggling 'against those passions, especially anger and judgement of others, which could kill the tender shoots of love'. The ultimate sign of holiness, for the Desert Fathers, was that their lives became transformed by love.⁹⁵

⁹¹ *ibid.* p. 122.

⁹² *ibid.* pp. 122-123.

⁹³ *ibid.* p. 135.

⁹⁴ *ibid.* pp. 184-186.

⁹⁵ *ibid.* p. 261.

Burton-Christie's enunciation of the desert tradition is insightful in balancing its asceticism with the commandment of love, and yet it fails to address the dualistic world view embedded within it. In this dualistic view, reality is perceived as having two separate levels, the supernatural (higher) level and the natural (lower) level. The supernatural order was associated with the next life, heaven, which is the ultimate aim of all living in this life, hence a denial of attachment to those things associated with the natural order. Feminist theologians, such as Rosemary Radford Reuther, Sandra Schneiders, Mary Daly and Zappone have provided critiques of this dualism and the destructiveness of this world view. Zappone argues that such a view sees humanity as created essentially separate from God and casts God as the beneficent ruler 'requiring humanity to deny its natural will and act according to the "will of the Father"'.⁹⁶ In keeping with the feminist critique of this view, and drawing on the work of Daly and Schneiders, Zappone also argues that this fundamental dualism is the basis of all others including those of man and woman, of mind and body, spirit and matter. Such dualism sets up a hierarchical relationship in which 'maleness images the really real, the powerful, and the good; femaleness images inferior, less good reality'.⁹⁷ Zappone also considers that this dualist perception of the world has led to the creation of social structures which are based upon social dominance of one group over another.⁹⁸ This dualism is expressed not only within social structures but also within the consciousness of the individual who is led to regard as sinful those behaviours which are associated with nature and the body: sexuality, pride in one's achievements or traits, the expression of emotions such as anger which aims to protect the needs of the individual in preference to those of the community, and any attachment to material possessions and personal relationships.

⁹⁶ Zappone, p. 24.

⁹⁷ *ibid.* pp. 24-25.

⁹⁸ *ibid.* p. 25.

The constructions of Madeleine Sophie's life reflect this dualism. In particular, her commitment to loving God through her willingness to suffer in this world for life in the next, her rejection of all worldly things and her lack of attachment to her own achievements. This dualism between God and humanity has a long history in the Church. Madeleine Sophie as a sacred symbol has become a carrier of this discourse. Analysis of the life which the religious led at Kerever Park, as discussed in chapter four, reveals the power of this monastic and dualistic discourse. They too strove to love God by renunciation of material possessions, denial of self in the form of physical comfort, friendships and intimacy, pride, and resistant feelings, as well as acceptance of the will of God as being conveyed through the superior. An entry in the House Journal bears witness to the emphasis placed on suffering and to its place in the construction of the ideal religious.

Mme [Mother] . . . did not return as she was growing weaker and weaker. She has been most useful and devoted as economé here, and we were very sorry to lose her; besides the fulfilment of her employment, she gave us unforgettable examples of religious spirit, patient and gentle endurance in her constant suffering state, utter self forgetfulness, cheerful and wonderful evenness of temper, etc., We owe her a debt of gratitude.⁹⁹

An experience reported by one of the religious interviewed revealed that such renunciation was not always left to the individual.

SB: I remember my mother once sent me a big supper cloth and all the materials to embroider it. It was all done in blue and white daisies and I was really very proud of it and I would just get it out every night and bit by bit and then people noticed that it was getting closer and closer to the end and just then, I think I even crocheted an edge and suddenly one of the teachers got married and the Superior said: Would you be finished that by the time she gets married? We'll give it to her for her wedding. So I scarcely had time to look at it once it was completed.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ House journal, 11 January 1945.

¹⁰⁰ S.B. 3 November 1995. Interview two.

The construction of Madeleine Sophie in various biographies has resulted in a mythical figure, a sacred symbol, who is the carrier of powerful messages about childhood, the ideal spiritual woman and the nature of God. A number of these biographies were written by members of the order and all for use in Sacred Heart schools and communities by both religious and children. In writings about her early life, it is possible to see the makings of the ideal woman: kind, gentle, sensitive to others, devoted, loving, hard working and universally attractive. Above all, she was obedient and she accepted the harshness of the educational regime her brother set her, suppressing her resistant feelings and behaviours. In the various writings about this aspect of her life, this educational regime was accepted as being necessary for later life. In being assigned particular talents and ability, she was cast as having these talents but also being removed from them. She was at the same time both full and devoid of her own ability, and certainly removed from it in her humility. The three messages here for young readers and for those seeking to educate them are, first, that suffering is the way to sanctity, second, that a strict educational regime is ultimately for your own benefit and resistant feelings are to be hidden, and, third, that while you may have ability there is a need to be removed from it rather than claiming it as your own possession.

As foundress of the order, she was constructed as accepting the will of God which was conveyed through the priests of the Church. Her own will and desires were again suppressed for the ultimate good of the Sacred Heart Society, the Church and humanity. In her refusal to accept the title of the foundress of the Society, she was held up as exemplary in her humility. As leader of the order, she was a guide to God, drawing on the monastic view of the world, which demanded: close attention to God through prayer and obedience as demonstrated in unquestioning acceptance of the directions of the superior, renunciation of pleasure and acceptance of suffering, humility and lack of personal ego especially in the form of pride, and above all concern with loving others rather than oneself.

Embedded in this discourse was a dualistic world view in which there was a binary split between the supernatural, higher order and the lower order of nature. In this construction, God became, as Zappone suggests, essentially separate from humanity, the beneficent ruler, 'requiring humanity to deny its natural will and act according to the "will of the Father" '.¹⁰¹ Exploration of the Mater Admirabilis symbol also reflects this dualism.

Mater Admirabilis

In the Kerever Park painting of *Sancta Magdalena Sophia*, Madeleine Sophie is depicted showing an open book to the three school children. On one side of the open book is a picture of Our Lady known as *Mater Admirabilis* and on the other side the words: 'See at your feet, Virgin Mary, the Sacred Heart family.'¹⁰² Theobald has suggested that the woman at the piano was a central figure in the iconography of nineteenth-century female education.¹⁰³ In Catholic schools a central icon was Mary, the mother of Jesus. In Sacred Heart schools the symbol of Mary was presented in the form of Mater Admirabilis (Figure 3). So central was the icon that it was prominently displayed in all Sacred Heart schools¹⁰⁴ and in some schools, such as Rose Bay, a small side chapel was given over to it. Cave reports on archival evidence that a large painting of Mater Admirabilis was among the few belongings the founders of the Society in Australia brought with them.¹⁰⁵

O'Leary, in her history of the educational work of the Society, describes the painting as bringing together the ideals set before the children, those

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* p. 24.

¹⁰² The original words are in French.

¹⁰³ Marjorie R. Theobald, *Knowing women: origins of women's education in nineteenth-century Australia*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ O'Leary, p. 317.

¹⁰⁵ Cave, p. 33.



Figure 3 : Mater Admirabilis.

'intangible realities which they must guard and cherish as a precious tradition' while to the nuns it 'stands as the expression of their life of mingled work and prayer'.¹⁰⁶ Denning refers in a similar manner to the intangible quality of such symbols. In his history of the Jesuit college, Xavier, he writes that 'signs and symbols are everywhere. One's eyes see them, but never see them'.¹⁰⁷ Barthes, however, is less willing to leave such signs uncontested. In *Mythologies*, he undertakes the process of demystifying symbols, particularly those associated with pictorial images, and the myths attached to them.

Pictures, to be sure, are more imperative than writing, they impose meaning at one stroke, without analysing or delimiting it. But this is no longer a constitutive difference. Pictures become a kind of writing as soon as they are meaningful; like writing, they call for a lexis.¹⁰⁸

Barthes challenges the lack of historical context of such images which result in 'giving an historical intention natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal'.¹⁰⁹ The work of putting back historical contingency and identifying the underlying discourses associated with pictorial symbols provides a lexis for reading them. Such work is helpful in developing insight into possible interpretations of the Mater Admirabilis image.

The original painting of Mater Admirabilis was completed as a fresco on the wall of the Roman convent of the Trinità dei Montini in 1844 by Pauline Perdrau, a young French postulant at the time. It depicts Mary, the mother of Jesus, as a young woman in late adolescence. She is seated on a chair in the temple and behind her lie the hills cast in the light of dawn. The Virgin, as she is called, is considered to be absorbed in prayer,

¹⁰⁶ O'Leary, p. 317.

¹⁰⁷ Greg Denning, *Xavier: a centenary portrait*, Melbourne, The Old Xaverians' Association, 1978, p. 240.

¹⁰⁸ Barthes, p. 110.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.* p. 142.

her hands folded, still with eyes cast downwards. A lily is placed in a vase at one side of her while on the other side sits her spinning distaff with an open book resting on her sewing basket. She is dressed in pink with a halo around her head.

O'Leary notes that Perdrau was assisted in her work by a number of pupils of the Roman convent and that their names have been recorded for posterity.¹¹⁰ O'Leary also claims that, in this interaction with the children, Perdrau was learning much about the ideals and the 'spirit' of the Society.

New aspirations were upon her, seeking expression in painting, the mother-tongue of her soul and, though unskilled in frescoes, she was striving to give life to her conception of the ideals set before the children of the Sacred Heart. Her hand seemed guided with a wondrous skill as in the setting of the old cloister she produced a new Madonna, Mary, as she must have been in the last year of her girlhood.¹¹¹

Perdrau, as a young postulant entering the Society, was also in the last years of her girlhood. She, too, had entered the 'temple' in leaving the 'secular' world behind and entering a life dedicated to prayer and the spiritual world. The dawn behind her may be interpreted as the dawn of her new life within the Society. In interpreting the picture, O'Leary gives no admittance to the picture as a construction of Perdrau's own subjectivity at that time. Yet it seems that the picture was as much about the one who painted it as about her subject. Unlike O'Leary, Williams provides some historical contingency to the construction of the picture when she refers to Perdrau as refusing to learn how to spin when a child. Her nurse's answer to this dilemma was to show the child a painting of Mary spinning¹¹² - so is the model of Mary used as the model of womanhood.

¹¹⁰ O'Leary, p. 315.

¹¹¹ *ibid.* pp. 315-316.

¹¹² Williams, *Saint Madeleine Sophie*, p. 361.

A superficial glance at the picture reveals objects which refer to the traditional construction of gender: the reference to sewing and spinning, the use of pink in the dress and the passivity of the figure. Also attached to this is the imagery generally associated with Mary: the book laid aside reflects her wisdom and ultimate perfection, the stillness of the figure reflects submission and other-worldliness as she turns to God in her acceptance of what is asked of her at this stage of life.¹¹³ However, moving beyond the superficial elements of the picture reveals some of the underlying ideology.

Placement of Mary in the temple reflects Mary's virginal state. Rosemary Radford Reuther has traced the place of 'virgins' in patristic theology, the theology of those considered to be the founding fathers of the Church: Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Jerome and Origen. She considers that embedded in this theology is an ambivalence between misogyny and the praise of virginal women.¹¹⁴ In the theology of these writers, woman was defined by both her 'subordination to the male in the order of nature and her "carnality" in the disorder of sin'.¹¹⁵ Reuther states that this:

double definition of woman, as submissive body in the order of nature and 'revolting' body in the disorder of sin, allows the Fathers to slide somewhat inconsistently from the second to the first and attribute woman's inferiority first to sin and then to nature.¹¹⁶

In this theology, Reuther identifies that the way out of this double bind for women was, according to Augustine, that woman, like man, has a rational nature and can be 'saved' by overcoming the body and living a virginal life.¹¹⁷ This virginal life allowed her to transcend the

¹¹³ Kennedy, p. xi.

¹¹⁴ Rosemary Radford Reuther, 'Misogyny and virginal feminism in the fathers of the Church', in Rosemary Radford Reuther (ed.), *Religion and sexism: images of woman in the Jewish and Christian traditions*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1974, p. 150.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 156.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 157.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 158.

weaknesses associated with the feminine, 'pettiness, maliciousness and sensuality of mind', and to take on the virtues of male ascetics; 'chastity, patience, wisdom, temperance, fortitude and justice'.¹¹⁸ Living as a virgin, she was thus able to deny the natural weaknesses associated with her sex. 'Her salvation must be seen not as an affirmation of her nature but a negation of her nature, both physically and mentally, and a transformation into a possibility beyond her natural capacities.'¹¹⁹ This soul-body dualism of patristic theology, according to Reuther:

blotted out the possibility of . . . personal relationship through the body, and made the relationship of man to woman essentially a subject-object relationship, in which the woman as 'sex object' was to be either wrongly abused for carnal pleasure or 'rightly used' in a dispassionate and objective (even clinical!) way as a material means or 'machine' for the achievement of a further objective, that is, the building up of the implanted male seed into a child.¹²⁰

Within this conceptualisation, there were three possible views of women: as whore, wife, or as virgin.¹²¹ Of these three choices, virginity was generally considered to be the highest choice.¹²² However, Gregory of Nyssa offered a more positive model of marriage. He considered that virginity could be taken as a metaphor for the married woman who while not denying her 'marital and maternal duties' may discharge these 'simply and without much absorption while giving her full affection to the life of vigils, fasting and prayer'.¹²³ Reuther argues that all these traditions of feminine spiritual imagery were brought together into Mariology when, in the fourth century, Mary was offered as the 'epitome

¹¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 159.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.* p. 161.

¹²⁰ *ibid.* p. 163.

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² *ibid.* p. 164.

¹²³ *ibid.* p. 177.

of all these images of spiritual womanhood'.¹²⁴ She comes to the following conclusion:

Virginal woman was thus bound for heaven, and her male ascetic devotees would stop at nothing short of this prize for her. But they paid the price of despising all real physical women, sex and fecundity, and wholly etherealizing women into incorporeal phantasms in order to provide love objects for the sublimated libido and guard against turning back to any physical expression of love with the dangerous daughters of Eve.¹²⁵

The influence of patristic theology has lasted well into this century. In the Australian setting, Kennedy refers to its influence within society both in Catholic and wider social circles.¹²⁶ Her exploration also reveals the ambivalence, noted by Reuther, between misogyny and the praise of virginal women. For example, while Catholic women were in Catholic periodicals of the nineteen thirties, forties and fifties described as 'guardians' of homes and the nation,¹²⁷ the only women above suspicion were those women living in the virginal state as members of religious communities.¹²⁸ The invasiveness of the Church into women's subjectivity continues into the 1990s as outlined, for example, in the writings of Veronica Brady and Maryanne Confoy (both of whom are members of religious orders). Brady states that the authoritarian nature of the institutional Church seeks to 'control, regulate and possess' women particularly in the areas of sexuality, family and personal relationships.¹²⁹ Drawing on the work of Edith Stein, Confoy argues that when women have become disturbed about their experience of oppression within the Church they were taught to sublimate their feelings for a higher good and

¹²⁴ *ibid.* p. 179.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*

¹²⁶ Kennedy, pp. xi-xii. See Weaver for the American context.

¹²⁷ *ibid.* p. xiv.

¹²⁸ *ibid.* p. xii. Kennedy includes two poems here which demonstrate this dualistic thinking on the part of Catholic priests.

¹²⁹ Veronica Brady, 'Every Christian in her own place: women's writing and theological understanding', in Maryanne Confoy, Dorothy A. Lee & Joan Nowotny (eds), *Freedom and entrapment: women thinking theology*, North Blackburn (Victoria), Dove, 1996, p. 66.

to dedicate their lives to self-sacrifice and service.¹³⁰ In this life of self-sacrifice, Mary was offered as the ultimate model. Married women may not be able to live the virginal lives of the religious but they could take Mary as their model as closely as possible.

In writing about the experience of being in a Sacred Heart boarding school, O'Leary refers to those who were educated in such settings as being 'part of the great life which sweeps around them, and that consciousness is a more lasting influence than would be the most perfectly developed pedagogical method'.¹³¹ In her history there is virtually no questioning of that 'great life' nor of embedded discourses, particularly of womanhood, which resided within the 'great life'. In contrast, within her writing the way in which the religious lived was considered to be the highest ideal for a Catholic woman. Students, in this setting, would also be moulded into this way of behaving.

Something of this religious atmosphere was made to pass into their [the students'] lives, their manners, speech, and tone of voice. Thus the silence and self-control demanded of them, their curtsies to Superiors, their gentleness and self-respect in dress and carriage expressed a definite and high ideal of womanhood, part of the tradition which moulded their lives.¹³²

The model of womanhood associated with Madeleine Sophie has already been outlined. The symbol of Mater Admirabilis adds to this model by offering a construction of womanhood which extols the virginal mother, removed from her sexuality, and following a life of self-sacrifice under the control of the male hierarchy of the church. As Mary was removed from sexuality with conception taking place only by the intervention of God rather than via her partner, so too were wives within the Catholic Church encouraged to consider intercourse as being for procreation rather

¹³⁰ Maryanne Confoy, 'Freedom, entrapment and the experience of "other" ', in Confoy, Lee and Nowotny, p. 17.

¹³¹ O'Leary, p. 10.

¹³² *ibid.* p. 65.

than sexual pleasure. This life of self-sacrifice required, as Confoy suggests, sublimation of any feelings of resistance. The discourse of conformity to the authority of the Church is also contained within the Mater Admirabilis icon. O'Leary captures this, as well as an emphasis on virginity, in her description of the picture.

There is about the picture an extraordinary restfulness combined with a feeling of intensity. The poise, the readiness, the perfect self-possession of the solitary figure, 'express as in a mirror the beauty of chastity and the loveliness of self-government,' but it is especially the face that gives the impression of peaceful energy, for the cheeks are slightly flushed as with the intensity of thought and purpose, while the downcast eyes give an effect of heavenly serenity. Those eyes are ready at any moment to turn themselves upon the onlooker, while the colour in Our Lady's cheeks seems almost to ebb and flow under our gaze.¹³³

Yet while O'Leary attributes conformity and obedience to the figure through her reference to 'the loveliness of self-government' as well as the ideology associated with virginity ('the beauty of chastity'), she also attributes characteristics to the figure which are associated with action ('intensity', 'energy'). This counterbalancing of 'restfulness' and 'energy' provides an interpretation which moves away from considering the figure purely as a passive figure. O'Leary's interpretation of the icon's capacity for action may be read from two perspectives. The first reading reflects the ideology of the Society, the second reading reflects a capacity for challenge and resistance.

As a religious order, the Society of the Sacred Heart was considered to be an active one in that their primary work was educational. This is in contrast with orders which were fully enclosed and whose members dedicated themselves entirely to a life of prayer. Members of these enclosed orders were removed from any contact with the outside world. The dual 'call' within the ideology of the religious of the Sacred Heart was

¹³³ *ibid.* p. 316. The quotation included in this extract comes from the writings of St Ambrose.

to apostolic or exterior work, in the form of education, and to an interior life, in the form of prayer. Erskine Stuart refers to these two aspects as 'the two drawings [that] are always at work; the drawing inwards, without which outward activity is empty, because nothing to give; and the urging outwards to give to others what has been received from God, whether by prayer or work'.¹³⁴ In the Plan of the Institute, it is stated that the spirit of the Society 'is essentially based upon prayer and the interior life, since we cannot worthily glorify the adorable Heart of Jesus, save inasmuch as we apply ourselves to study its interior dispositions in order to unify and conform ourselves to them'.¹³⁵

Prayer life was central in the lives of the religious. They would begin their prayer, after they were called at twenty past five in the morning, when an hour would then be spent in individual prayer. This individual prayer included the highly structured Ignatian approach based on composition of place and imagination. Barry, writing for the religious in 1950, argues that this prayer life required a complete stripping of self, particularly the 'conquest' of 'passions' in search of union with God. Such conquest also had an outcome which was ostensibly helpful to the community in that it made them, in Barry's words, 'peaceful, calm, dependent, humble . . . full of devotedness . . . [and] easy to get on with!'¹³⁶ Hence, one way of interpreting the aim of this capacity for action was in association with the goals and needs of the organisation: being a conforming member of the community and willingly undertaking work.

Additionally, the fostering of such behaviour was perceived by the Society to be important in the process of fostering vocations to the order. Those in authority in the Society were purposeful in encouraging vocations and they were aware that the model provided by religious was essential if young people were to be tempted to join. In a document published in 1949

¹³⁴ Erskine Stuart, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, pp. 58-59.

¹³⁵ Society of the Sacred Heart, *The constitutions*, p. 6.

¹³⁶ Barry, p. 30.

on school regulations within Australian Sacred Heart schools, the fostering of religious vocations was listed as part of moral training. In this section, religious are warned to present a mode of behaviour which echoes descriptions of the Mater Admirabilis icon who is both prayerful and who has a capacity for action.

Children may be repelled by evidence of strain and overwork, or by any want of perfect charity and courtesy among religious. On the other hand, the bright joyousness of the Young Religious and the serenity of the older religious may have a decided influence, as also an apparently casual remark, or our telling the children, at class or recreation, something of the ideals and work of the Society. There must be discretion in all this, and never any open propaganda.¹³⁷

This campaign was successful, as a number of religious remembered being drawn to the order through the behaviour of the nuns.¹³⁸

In the fostering of vocations the mistress general was directed to take the principal lead. In her dealings with children she could utilise small opportunities for this work. Again, care had to be taken not to turn a child off the thought of becoming a religious.

Fostering Vocations. The Mistress General has her principal opportunity of fostering vocations when the children come to her for visits. The more informal these visits appear to the children, the better. The main thing is for the Mistress General to gain and keep the confidence of the children. Reverend Mother Salmon once gave this advice: 'If a child comes to you by chance, never surprise her with an unexpected scolding.'¹³⁹

This fostering of vocations was not reserved for students in secondary school. In this same section of the document, reference was made to children in junior schools being encouraged to begin practices which

¹³⁷ Society of the Sacred Heart, Meetings concerning school regulations, held at Rose Bay, Sydney, December 29th 1947 - January 5th 1948, Rose Bay archives, Sydney, p. 44.

¹³⁸ See E.B. 2 September 1995. Interview two and S.B. 3 November 1995. Interview two.

¹³⁹ Society of the Sacred Heart, Meetings concerning school regulations, held at Rose Bay, Sydney, December 29th 1947-January 5th 1948, unpublished material, Rose Bay archives, Sydney, p. 43.

might lead into the contemplative way of life practised by the nuns.

Even children in the Junior School can be helped to make little meditations, to pray and to love Our Lord, perhaps more easily in those years before they have any human respect. Aloysians as a privilege might have a meditation from time to time, and at their visit to the Blessed Sacrament all might plan to think over a scene in Our Lord's life, and so make real personal prayer.¹⁴⁰

Sacred Heart schools had a system of congregations starting in junior schools and culminating in the Children of Mary in senior school. When the Children of Mary was developed in 1832, Madeleine Sophie envisioned that through this group the work of the order would be extended.

Your mission is sublime; I do not hesitate to call it an apostolate, for you must be apostles in the midst of a corrupt world. Bring back by your example those of your companions who have strayed, encourage those who are weak through human respect, save those who are prey to hell . . . My heart thrills to the thought of the good that will result from this work. . . This it seems to me, is the mission of a Child of Mary: what we cannot do on account of our enclosure, that is your work. We have gathered you together like an advance guard to replace us in the world.¹⁴¹

At Kerever Park, the Congregation of the Holy Child was the first step in this path and Mary, in the form of Mater Admirabilis, provided the model.¹⁴² On the back of one of the many pictures of religious icons, known as 'holy cards', were often printed short prayers. The following prayer was printed on the back of a picture of Mater Admirabilis. Again, the embedded discourse was one of conformity and obedience to those in authority through the suppression of any conflict.

Most gentle Mother, teach us to show in all our conduct that perfect gentleness which springs from this true charity. Guard

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.* p. 44.

¹⁴¹ Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, p. 78.

¹⁴² In the School Register, note was made beside students who received the Holy Child Medal. Kerever Park, School register 1944-1965, unpublished material, Rose Bay archives, Sydney.

our hearts as thine own treasured possession. Guard our lips that our speech may be as thine, helpful, kind, uplifting.¹⁴³

Devotion to Our Lady was central at Kerever Park. The House Journal notes celebration of various feast days associated with Mary, including that of Mater Admirabilis. Reference was also made to enactments, by the children, of various plays relating to Mary. For example, a nativity play called 'The Beautiful Lady'.¹⁴⁴ Each year the children undertook a ceremony called The Procession of the Lilies which was outlined within the Journal.

It was very devotional and beautiful. The children had real lilies (bought, as ours were not quite out yet) their blue cotton dress and white veils made a perfect picture; they made the offering of their lilies at the foot of the altar in the chapel. 'May Our dear Lady keep indeed all the lilies of their heart.'¹⁴⁵

In 1954, Marian Year in which the Church placed further emphasis on Mary, a section of the school garden was named Marian Way. Such ceremonies and emphasis locate Mary as a central image presented to the children. This model was associated with purity¹⁴⁶ and had little to do with notions of resistance, as the House Journal depiction of children, dressed in white veils and laying their lily at the foot of Mary, bears witness.

O'Leary refers to the eyes of the virgin, in the Mater Admirabilis icon, as being 'ready at any moment to turn themselves upon the onlooker'. While this capacity for movement may be interpreted as the capacity for action required by the educational work of the Society, it may also be read as containing the potential for challenge and resistance. Resistance and

¹⁴³ Society of the Sacred Heart, *Mater Admirabilis*, no date, holy card held by Christine Trimmingham Jack. Prayer taken from a 'holy card' showing a picture of Mater Admirabilis on the front. The card was kept by an ex-student of the school.

¹⁴⁴ House journal, 22 November 1944.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.* 8 September 1946.

¹⁴⁶ E.R. 18 August 1995. Interview one.

challenge in any form require an immediacy of thought and feeling. Bell hooks refers to the 'gaze' as being political in that by looking we declare our resistance: 'Not only will I stare. I want my look to change reality.'¹⁴⁷

The 'gaze' has been and is a site of resistance for colonized black people globally. Subordinates in relations of power learn experientially that there is a critical gaze, one that 'looks' to document, one that is oppositional. In resistance struggle, the power of the dominated to assert agency by claiming and cultivating 'awareness' politicizes 'looking' relations - one learns to look in a certain way in order to resist.¹⁴⁸

While hooks was referring to the oppression of black people, her point has relevance for Kerever Park. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the nature of the school was hierarchical with all authority residing in the superiors. Obedience and conformity to those in authority was the dominating discourse for both religious and students. While the religious might have some authority over the students, they were not encouraged to use their initiative. To step outside the established practices resulted in reprimand. The majority of members of both groups sought to, at least, demonstrate in their behaviour that they accepted this discourse. Yet, as will be discussed, both private and public resistance remained an option.

Ricoeur argues that there resides a 'surplus of signification' - a surplus of meaning - within any symbol.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, Madeleine Grumet notes that an 'emblem can function simultaneously as rationalization, denial, accommodation, and resistance'.¹⁵⁰ In O'Leary's description, while she notes Mary's 'downcast eyes' and as surrounded by symbols associated

¹⁴⁷ bell hooks, 'The oppositional gaze: black female spectators', in Peggy Zeglin Brand & Carolyn Korsmeyer (eds), *Feminism and tradition in aesthetics*, University Park (Pennsylvania), The Pennsylvania State University, 1995, p. 143.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.* p. 144.

¹⁴⁹ Ricoeur, *Interpretation theory*, p. 55.

¹⁵⁰ Madeleine R. Grumet, 'Curriculum and the art of daily life', in George Willis & William H. Schubert (eds), *Reflections from the heart of educational inquiry: understanding curriculum and teaching through the arts*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1991, p. 78.

with the traditional role of women, the counterbalancing intensity and energy hints at an interpretation in which Mary is capable of looking at the onlooker. In her description of the symbol, perhaps unconsciously, O'Leary suggests both an interpretation of the icon which is about acceptance of the rule of authority and also the possibility of a critical gaze and resistance.¹⁵¹

The Mater Admirabilis icon was not brought into the interviews by any of those who participated. However, she was referred to in two informal discussions with participants. A member of the order stated 'that we love her for her downcast eyes'.¹⁵² This view of the icon is also reflected in the writings of Williams who refers to it as the Society's 'treasure of calm and serenity'.¹⁵³ In contrast an ex-student, Judith who was highly challenging and resistant while at the school, stated that Mater Admirabilis was the one image she liked: 'She has potential.'¹⁵⁴

Certainly, Ricoeur's notion of the 'surplus of meaning' within a symbol is helpful in understanding my own experience in writing this thesis and the place of this symbol in the process. In the period in which I was engaged in reading the history of the Society, I became very interested in the Mater Admirabilis icon. In fact, some synchronicity occurred when a house visitor spontaneously gave me a small replica of the icon worked in wood and silver which had been given to her recently by an international visitor. As I read and attempted my early drafts I found myself both annoyed by and drawn to the icon. I resented the passivity of the picture and the way in which Mary has been used within the Church, to keep women silent and accepting of their position within that structure. Indeed, part of the work of this thesis is about exploring the

¹⁵¹ O'Leary includes this discussion in the epilogue. At no stage in her book does she raise the issue of resistance and it seems that she wrote this section without critically reflecting on how her interpretation might be linked to the behaviour of students and religious. O'Leary, pp. 315-317.

¹⁵² S.B. Informal discussion. 3 November 1995.

¹⁵³ Williams, *Saint Madeleine Sophie*, p. 362.

¹⁵⁴ J.H. Informal discussion. 19 July 1996.

ideology of the Church, as expressed through the Society, and challenging it. Yet as I attempted to deconstruct the key symbols of the Society, especially the constructions of Madeleine Sophie, I found myself worried by the demythologising which was taking place and it seemed as if my childhood honouring of such saints at times took precedence over my desire for critical review. Zappone's reference to the challenging of sacred symbols as being synonymous with challenging the power of God was helpful in providing me with a discourse which allowed me to proceed.¹⁵⁵

At the same time as I found myself annoyed by the icon, and wondering if it had become an outmoded symbol, I caught myself saying the first few lines of Alfred Tennyson's poem, *The Lady of Shalott* : 'She left the web, she left the loom, she took three paces through the room and looked down to Camelot.'¹⁵⁶ When I became aware of this background thinking, I reflected on why those lines would suddenly come to consciousness and be associated with this image. Part of it, I believe, was my struggle to find my own voice in the writing of this thesis and to get my work 'out the door' - this last term referring to having confidence in my ability to write a critical history which would hold authority. An associated meaning for me was the transition from silence to a 'critical gaze' as I went about the work of making my voice heard in resisting the hegemonic practices associated with Church ideology. For me, the icon of Mater Admirabilis also contained potential, as it did for the ex-student, and I imagined Mary moving from her position within the temple - exemplifying the image of the spiritual woman who is silent, accepting and prayerful - to a woman who speaks from her own authority, who does not accept her demeaned position within the Church and who is active in the world in bringing about change.

¹⁵⁵ Zappone, p. 29. Zappone writes from a feminist perspective and this book is largely about the impact of various symbols and Church teaching on women.

¹⁵⁶ I have not looked up this reference and it may not be accurate. What is important is that this is what I remembered from the poem and the meaning it held for me.

It is possible to consider the Mater Admirabilis icon as reflecting at least two possible positions within power relations. On the one hand, with downcast eyes, a woman may position herself within the discourses of Mariology - as the self-sacrificing virginal woman intent on the rewards of heaven rather than of this world. On the other hand, a woman may look up, choose the oppositional gaze and challenge the dominant discourses. Kennedy has documented how some Catholic women in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s chose to challenge the authority of the Church. The writings of Brady and Confoy bear witness to such challenge in this present decade of the twentieth century. In listening to the experiences of those who were religious and students at Kerever Park, it is possible to locate those who chose, in the main, to align themselves with the dominating discourses of the school, those who chose resistance to them, and those who positioned themselves variously between alignment and resistance.

Conclusion

The sacred symbols of the Sacred Heart, Madeleine Sophie and Mater Admirabilis were the bearers of powerful discourses which served in the construction of the lives and consciousnesses of both religious and students. In earlier understandings of the Sacred Heart, especially those attributed to Madeleine Sophie, the discourse of love expressed by sacrifice and suffering as well as the discourse of the mysterious and ineffable love of God stand in metaphoric tension with each other. However, in later texts, particularly those which religious would have read in the period of Kerever Park, it was the discourse of love expressed by sacrifice and suffering which predominated. In constructions of Madeleine Sophie's life, this discourse was given further emphasis as it became tied to the discourse of conformity and obedience to those in authority. Attachment of this last discourse to the Sacred Heart symbol and to the life of the saint, especially in acquiescence to those in authority, reified the discourse, giving those in power the authority of God.

The symbols stand in a hierarchical relationship to each other. To emulate the life of Christ as a life totally given over for love was the pinnacle of aspiration. The path defined for this emulation was embedded in a dualistic world view in which humanity was considered to be totally separate from God. Achievement of relationship with God could be gained only through a denial of humanity and the suffering associated with this denial. The way in which men and women could live such a life was both determined by their biological status and also in denial of it. As women, the highest calling for a Catholic woman was to be a religious. The higher status of priesthood was preserved for males. Yet while biology determined the way in which women and men could serve within the church, paradoxically this included a denial of the sexuality which separated them into discrete groups. Although religious life was the highest calling for a woman, married women too could aspire to this virginal life by also dedicating themselves to their families in a life of sacrifice and suffering. In this life, Mary as the virginal married woman was the ultimate model. Within the Society, the *Mater Admirabilis* icon was presented as the ideal for those students who would follow this way of life. Yet examination of this symbol reveals that associated interpretations may not always reflect the dominant discourses. There is a surplus of meaning within any symbol and, in the case of the *Mater Admirabilis* icon, the possibility of resistance.

A second hymn to Madeleine Sophie was contained in the hymn book used at Kerever Park. Within this hymn, it is possible to see all the constructions of the ideal virginal woman brought together: sinless, lowly, meek, loving, silent, suffering, patient, obedient to the will of God and prepared to offer up happiness in this world for happiness in the next. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, this model of ideal childhood, womanhood and spirituality was a powerful force in the educational ideology practised at Kerever Park.

Saint Madeleine Sophie

Who can count the myriad voices
In the spotless Virgin-choir,
With the Lamb to lead and guide them,
He the crown of their desire?
His new song unending singing,
In His Blood their robes washed white,
One with Him, their King and Bridegroom,
Rapt and blissful in His sight.
Sancta Sophia, ora pro nobis

And among the starry millions
There is one we claim to call
As her daughters, as her children,
Mother, sweetest name of all.
Holy Church has crowned and blessed her,
Blessed her work and blessed her name,
Blessed her lowliness and meekness,
Blessed her life with love aflame.
Sancta Sophia, ora pro nobis

Patience now can taste the sweetness
Of the chalice fraught with pain:
Silent, suffering merged in rapture,
Earthly loss in heavenly gain.
Life in sacrifice she offered
Of her love the seal and sign,
She had learnt the fullest meaning
Of the gift of Love Divine.
Sancta Sophia, ora pro nobis

Saint and Mother, lead they children
There, where seraph-voices raise
Lofty hymn of deep thanksgiving,
Glorious song of fullest praise.
Laud and honour to the Father,
To the all-redeeming Son,
To the sanctifying Spirit,
While unending ages run.
*Sancta Sophia, ora pro nobis.*¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ *Hymns for the use of the children of the Sacred Heart*, pp. 96-97.

CHAPTER THREE

DISCOURSES OF ASPIRATION

The school vestibule of Kerever Park was small in comparison with those found in buildings intentionally designed for school purposes. The walls were papered in a homely flowered chintz design and the two parlours leading off the vestibule were also decorated in similar English country patterns. It was uncluttered, containing no picture of past principals or a place for a receptionist. A large 'striking clock' stood at one side of the hall.¹ Although some small paintings, including a landscape, decorated the walls, two larger sacred symbols dominated the vestibule: the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting and a statue of Jesus as a child.² Under the painting of the foundress with three Kerever Park children was a small table with a vase of flowers placed on it. The statue of the young Jesus was also on a table with flowers placed near it. The two tables decorated with flowers added a shrine-like quality to the symbols. On walking through the vestibule, one's eye was then caught by the grand staircase which led up to the chapel. The walls beside the stairs also contained a number of sacred symbols, including a painting of the Sacred Heart. The doorway to the children's dining room was tucked away beside the base of the stairs, opposite the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting. Each time the children left the dining room or went to the chapel they passed the picture.

The statue of Jesus as a child and the painting of Madeleine Sophie speaking with three Kerever Park children conveyed that the school was about educating young children. This adaptation of these two sacred symbols to reflect childhood allowed a discourse of school as home to

¹ Kerever Park, House journal, unpublished material, 1944-1966, Rose Bay archives, Sydney, 20 February 1944.

² There were also a few other smaller pictures in the vestibule which I have not been able to identify. Author anonymous, 'At home at Kerever Park', *Cor Unum: the chronicle of the convents of the Sacred Heart Australia*, vol. 6, 1949-50, p. 72. My memory is that they were landscapes and small religious pictures. Sister Betty McMahon, who co-ordinates the conference centre, supports this memory. Since the closure of the school, Kerever Park has become a retirement centre for elderly members of the Society and a conference centre.

emerge. However, the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* picture conveyed clear messages about the educational work of Kerever Park - messages which sit in tension with the discourse of school as home.

Colin Symes has drawn attention to the way in which school architecture reconstructs, on a daily basis, the particular epistemological and pedagogic functions on which schools are based.

The significant feature of the school architecture is the way its various elements are 'reconstructed' and 'redecorated' on a daily basis in line with particular epistemological and pedagogic functions and ends. For example, the furnishings and movements, the particularised spatial ethnographies and choreographies associated with a laboratory are different from those of a history or music classroom. The spatial conditions, along with the way these are furnished with material artefacts of various kinds, of the school are thus an integral part of its epistemological organisation, which gives objective expression to the disciplinary elements of the curriculum.³

In this reconstruction, the school vestibule, according to Symes, enshrines important aspects of the culture of the school, establishing the 'symbolic climate of the school' - its discourses of aspiration.⁴

[The school vestibule] is where the school enshrines important aspects of its culture, where it conducts various strategies of impression management, and establishes the symbolic climate of the school. . . . the vestibule is fundamentally a threshold space, marking a point of spatial transformation, a boundary area where, through a particular range of artefacts and 'symbolic architecture' (Corrigan, 1987), a school is constituted and given summary formation. Further, it is suggested that the vestibule exploits what are called 'appearance discourses' that pivot around the principle that the character of an institution is immanent within its visible structures (Finkelstein, 1991) with the various edifices it presents to the world, and that adhere to the idea that the judgements

³ Colin Symes, First impressions: the semiotics of school vestibules, unpublished paper presented at the 26th annual conference of the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society, Childhood Citizenship Culture, QUT, Brisbane, July 1996, p. 1.

⁴ The term 'discourses of aspirations' is my term not Symes's, although I suggest it is in keeping with his concept of 'appearance discourses'.

inferred from the appearance are always efficacious and veracious.⁵

Both the spatial conditions of Kerever Park, that is, the building itself and surrounding lands, and the vestibule of Kerever Park reflected two public aspirations of the school which sat in tension with each other: that the school be a home for young children and that it be a setting for successful achievement of the educational goals of the Society. These competing discourses are discussed in the following sections.

The School as Home

The establishment in 1944 of Kerever Park was the result of a war-time evacuation of children. The evacuation took the children away from the vulnerable Sydney Harbour area into the safety of rural Bowral. Bowral was considered to be a place of retreat for Sydney-siders, with a number of wealthy families owning large country homes in the area.⁶ When it was deemed that evacuation was necessary, a number of guest houses were found in the Bowral area for students from both Sydney Sacred Heart schools, Rose Bay and Kincoppal.⁷ The younger children were re-located to the Rift, a guest house in Bowral located down the hill from a local lookout and picnic area called The Gib. The guest house had no substantial grounds around it and so the children were allowed to play in the street; some even brought their bikes to ride there. Due to the circumstances, the nuns were freed from the tight restrictions of enclosure and walks and picnics were taken around the local area including walking up the steep hill to The Gib.⁸ Much to the children's

⁵ Symes, pp. 2-3.

⁶ The House Journal of Kerever Park bears witness to connections with these families. Listed among its early visitors were Sir Mark and Lady Sheldon, 'frequent visitors during the weekends', who also gave support to establishment of the permanent foundation. House journal, 30th January 1944.

⁷ The Rose Bay children were in Bowral at The Rift and Laurel Park, while the Kincoppal children went to a guesthouse in Bundanoon.

⁸ D.G. 1 April 1996. Interview one.

delight a phaeton was sometimes used to visit the other guest houses where the rest of the children were located and at least once a week Mrs Fitzharding arrived leading a trail of horses to give the children riding lessons. The children rode in their school uniforms which made the experience less pleasant than it might have been. Although the religious and children enjoyed greater freedom than that experienced at Rose Bay, life at the Rift had a temporary quality to it, such as the children needing to share furniture including sisters sharing a double bed.⁹

When hostilities ceased and the children were able to return to Sydney, Mother Dorothy McGuinness, then superior general of the Society in Australian and New Zealand, decided that 'so happy had they [the junior children] been in their peaceful country setting, with rosy cheeks and shining eyes telling of the benefits of fresh air and country food, that it seemed they should not be taken from their great out-of-doors'.¹⁰ Her motivation to establish Kerever Park may well have been located in the preparatory school tradition of healthy country living, away from the larger secondary school. The religious of the Sacred Heart had a number of schools in England and indeed three of the five women who were part of the first wave into Australia were English.¹¹

The tradition of preparatory schools being conducted in country settings has been well documented by Donald Leinster-Mackay. He lists three characteristics of such schools: 'separation' of younger students from secondary students, 'preparation' for academic life in larger public schools, and 'rustication', with this preparation being conducted in country settings.¹² Leinster-Mackay also notes that a healthy setting was an

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Author anonymous, *The establishment of Kerever Park*, unpublished material, Rose Bay archives, Sydney, no date.

¹¹ Leila Barlow, *Living stones: Convent of the Sacred Heart, Rose Bay 1882-1982*, Sydney, Kincoppal-Rose Bay School, 1982, p. 19.

¹² Donald Leinster-Mackay, *The rise of the English preparatory school*, East Sussex, Falmer Press, 1984, p. 12.

important characteristic for early preparatory schools.¹³ It is possible to argue that the separation of younger children from secondary students in a country setting which was considered to be healthier reflected a desire for a school which was more homely than institutional, however, the 'preparation' function off sets the desire to move away from an institutional mode. The boys' schools which Leinster-Mackay writes about are not depicted as being particularly homely, however, it does seem that the establishment of Kerever Park included overt expression of this desire.¹⁴

It is likely that Mother McGuinness's desire for the younger children 'not to be taken away' from the country life may also have originated in her own early life which was marked by the death of both her parents.¹⁵ This experience of being 'taken away' from her parents at a young age may have given her access to understanding how many of the children, who were sent from their country homes to attend a city boarding school, felt.¹⁶ Establishing a boarding school in the country may have, in her mind, reduced the dislocation for these children and allowed a setting which was more homely than a large secondary school could provide.

A desire for Kerever Park to be a 'home' may be inferred from the first entry in the House Journal written by an anonymous author, most certainly a religious.

The house of Mr and Mrs Finlay in Riversdale Avenue, known as Knoyle, was visited by Reverend Mother McGuinness, Mother Morrison, Mothers McGee and Treney, 9th July, 1943. All four were charmed with the homely atmosphere, beautiful gardens and peaceful surroundings and, though other places were inspected, we found nothing more suitable. The house is a two storey

¹³ *ibid.* p. 121.

¹⁴ In the period in which Kerever Park existed as a school, other preparatory schools were operating in the Bowral region, including Tudor House at Moss Vale, a junior boys' school of The King's School, Parramatta.

¹⁵ M.D. 25 September 1995. Interview two.

¹⁶ E.B. 18 August 1995. Interview one and E.B. 2 September 1995. Interview two.

structure, stucco outside, planned by Mrs Fairfax, one is not surprised to learn this fact, as the wide hall and stairs, spacious kitchen and dependencies reveal the woman's touch. Knoyle [the original name of the property] has always been a "home" and when we visited it we dreamed of a permanent "Home" for the Sacred Heart in Burradoo from which our children would pass on to Rose Bay, founded in the elements of religion and knowledge suitable to their age.¹⁷

The original building of the school, known as Knoyle, was built by Charles Fairfax, the brother of James Reading Fairfax, son of the founder of the Sydney Morning Herald. It was named after an old homestead in England and was designed by an English architect, Maurice Evans, who also built Woodside, the James Fairfax country estate in Moss Vale. It was built in Queen Anne style with large chimneys, wide verandahs and bay mullioned windows. Formal gardens and park were laid out around the house as well as a coach house called The Mews. Evidence exists which suggests that the home was built in the 1890s. The Fairfax's eventually sold the home to the Finlay family and, although it was not for sale when the Sacred Heart religious went in search of a permanent property, the Finlay's, by now an elderly couple, were eventually 'persuaded to sell'.¹⁸

Knoyle had been the country home of Charles Fairfax and as such it was built in the style of the English country homes owned by members of the upper classes. A number of wealthy Sydney families had similar homes in the area and the Society of the Sacred Heart had, since its inception, served the educational needs of the upper classes.¹⁹ It was mainly the

¹⁷ *House journal*, first entry, January 1944.

¹⁸ Margaret Taylor, 'Homesteads of the good and famous', unpublished paper, 1993, Rose Bay archives, Sydney, pp. 4-5.

¹⁹ See Donald Cave, 'The pedagogical traditions of the religious of the Sacred Heart in France and Australia', in Imelda Palma (ed.), *Melbourne Studies in Education*, Melbourne, University of Melbourne Press, 1985, pp. 28 & 34. Educating the upper classes was not the sole concern of the Society. In Europe, 'poor schools' were also opened alongside the 'pensionnat' but, as Cave points out, while it was attempted to transplant this concept into Australia, 'completely different social conditions doomed them to failure'.

children of graziers and professional people who sent their children to Kerever Park.²⁰

The recollections of Charles and Enid Stevenson are indicative of the class arrangement in the school setting. Charles became the property manager in 1945, under the direction of Mother Helen Boydell, and eighteen months later he and his wife were offered accommodation in a small cottage within the school grounds.²¹ (At various times other men were employed to assist in the farm work.) Charles reported that the school 'was a real family' in that he 'felt needed', was invited to special events at the school, handled the money for the religious on rare visits to town and attended local funerals as the school representative. However, in spite of feeling that they were part of the school family, the Stevensons commented that they had little contact with the children. 'I kept my place. If the girls spoke to me I spoke to them', stated Charles. After this comment Enid added: 'The same with me too.'²² Other comments within the transcript indicate that the nature of this 'family' was hierarchical and in keeping with that of the upper classes. The Stevensons felt that they were treated fairly and generously for hard work and loyalty to the 'family' of Kerever Park, yet they were kept at a social distance, with Charles being referred to neither as 'Charlie' nor as 'Mister' but as

20 M.F. 5 June 1996. Interview one. In the group of nine ex-students interviewed, seven came from rural backgrounds and two were the daughters of professional men. Sister Marie Kennedy also pointed out that children were also accepted into Rose Bay and Kerever Park on a kind of scholarship arrangement due to the financial position of their parents but this arrangement was not made public in any way. It is recorded in the Kerever Park School Register that eighteen fee reductions were made with twelve of these reductions being made for students entering in 1946. Kerever Park, School register, unpublished material, 1944-1965, Rose Bay archives, Sydney.

21 Charles and Enid Stevenson. 30 June 1996. Interview one. Charles and Enid Stevenson remained at the school until the end of 1951 when he left as he didn't 'see eye to eye' with Mother Helen Boydell, who was in charge of his work. Contrary to the ideas of Helen Boydell, he believed that there was a need to purchase some large farming tools such as a tractor and a truck - the school having no large mechanical tools such as a tractor at that time. He returned at the beginning of 1957 at the request of Lillian McGee who was then in charge and remained until a year after the official closure of the school on 12 February 1966. On his return these vehicles were purchased.

22 *ibid.*

'Stevenson'.²³ Additionally, while the rules of enclosure resulted in the assignment of duties which were normally outside those of employees in such a setting, such as representing the school at funerals, the rules of the Church also resulted in social and physical distance between the religious and the Stevensons. For example, due to the rule of enclosure the religious were not allowed to enter the grounds of the cottage in which the Stevensons lived and when their first child was born the religious did not visit nor pay the child any attention until it was baptised.²⁴

While the Stevensons worked behind the public front of the school, so too did the coadjutrix sisters. The seventh point of the Plan of the Institute in the Society's Constitutions reads: 'The Society is composed of two classes of person, those destined for teaching and those who are to be employed in household duties.'²⁵ When young women joined the Society, they could become choir nuns who were directly involved in the educational work of the Society, usually as teachers. This group were called 'choir nuns' because part of their commitment was to sing Office, the community prayer of adoration sung three times a day. Alternatively, a woman could become a coadjutrix sister, coadjutrix meaning 'helper', undertaking domestic duties and manual work. A woman who entered as a choir nun had approximately two and a half years of training. Those who joined as sisters immediately began their work in the house, with limited time, in comparison with the choir nuns, being given to religious instruction on the Constitution of the order, spiritual exercises and spiritual reading. The reality was they received little education both in

²³ *ibid.* Charles discussed the upper class background of Helen Boyde, 'brought up under a governess' and who was 'a great grand-daughter of Bishop Broughton' - the Anglican Archbishop who established the Anglican churches in the Port Macquarie district and also The King's School, Parramatta.

²⁴ *ibid.* They reported that this caused considerable difficulty when Enid was ill and confined to bed. At this time, Lillian McGee expressed frustration that the rules of enclosure would not allow a visit.

²⁵ Society of the Sacred Heart, *The constitutions and rules of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, Roehampton, 1928, closed document, Rose Bay archives, Sydney, p. 7.

their formative and subsequent years as a religious, at least until the tiered system ended after Vatican Two.²⁶

These distinctions were part of class structure of nineteenth-century France in which lower class workers were confined to 'domestic service, heavy labor, and ill-paid labor-intensive industries like the lace trade'.²⁷ Williams notes that after the first generation of religious joined the order, most vocations within the Society were from the middle classes.²⁸ It seems likely that part of the reason for the continuance of this class structure within the society was a reflection of the fact that the majority of religious were from a background used to having domestic servants. Information, gained in interviews, reveals that most of the religious who staffed Kerever Park were also used to having domestic assistance in their families of origin.²⁹ Williams records no evidence of any attempt to extend the education of those sisters who might have sought teaching as a career yet were barred from it because of their lack of education. In fact, the reference in the Constitutions of the Society to 'those destined for teaching, and those who are to be employed in household duties' suggests a deterministic view of such class distinctions. The evidence gathered for this history does not suggest that there was any attempt to further the education of the sisters at the time that Kerever Park was open, in fact, it seems to have been discouraged.³⁰

Erschine Stuart, writing in 1923, considered this lack of education to be an attribute in spiritual life.

Why should they be refused? They are our sisters and friends in honour, often patterns of religious perfection, and happier in their

²⁶ P.R. 3 October 1995. Interview one and 10 October 1995. Interview two.

²⁷ Jane Abray, 'Feminism in the French Revolution', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 80, no. 1, 1975, p. 44.

²⁸ Margaret Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart: history of a spirit, 1800-1975*, London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978, p. 76.

²⁹ E.B. 18 August 1995. Interview two; P.R. 3 October 1995. Interview one

³⁰ P.R. 3 October. Interview one.

circumstances, perhaps, than many choir religious for who, as 'the poor Mothers' they often express genuine sympathy and feeling. Un-distracted as they are from spiritual interests by occupations that do not absorb their whole attention, they often attain a high degree of interior recollection, and their unburdened memory is singularly tenacious of all good and beautiful things that they hear.³¹

One of the religious (a choir nun) interviewed for this research echoed a similar discourse of happy ignorance in her recollection of a coadjutrix sister sharing 'feeling sorry' for the choir nuns who have to concentrate on their work with the children while the sisters were free to continue their meditations while undertaking domestic work.³²

Just as the work of the sisters was hidden, so too is their place in histories relating to the order. O'Leary enters into no discussion of their place within the boarding schools of the Society. Williams in her history of the work of the Society pays them scant attention beyond a brief discussion of the origins of this hierarchical arrangement dating back to the Middle Ages. She explains the function of this arrangement as being 'the desire to open religious life to all who felt called to it in an epoch when differences of education and social status would otherwise have been a barrier'.³³ She concludes that without such a distinction, many vocations from less educated women would have 'been lost to the Society'.³⁴ The theological explanation for this arrangement is referred to as a vocation 'marked by simplicity, by humble, hidden service like that of Nazareth' referring to the humble origins of Jesus.³⁵ This same explanation was offered by the coadjutrix sister interviewed for this research who drew upon the discourse of love expressed through sacrifice and suffering to explain her vocation, yet there was some dissonance in this explanation in her

³¹ Janet Erskine Stuart, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, Roehampton, Convent of the Sacred Heart, 1923, p. 27.

³² S.B. 3 November 1995. Interview two.

³³ Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, p. 43.

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ *ibid.*

referral to the work the sisters did as being 'employment', thereby placing it within the context of social relations.³⁶ While Williams engages in theological explanations for this arrangement, she exhibits a degree of social distance in her discussion of Josefa Menendez, a Spanish coadjutrix sister who in the early 1920s was the recipient of a number of extraordinary religious visions. Williams describes this sister as 'a simple, ardent little person who had supported her family by dressmaking'.³⁷ There was little reference to the sisters in the interviews with either the choir nuns or the ex-students although one ex-student referred to one as a 'very sweet little sister' who 'didn't speak very much'.³⁸ This same ex-student thought that some of the sisters may have been 'Italian or another nationality', a comment which indicated the social distance between the children and the sisters. None of the sisters was of Italian origins although some were from England and New Zealand.³⁹

Williams' argument that the sisters were accepted into this vocation due to their lack of education does not seem adequate for all the sisters who were employed at Kerever Park. Evelyn Stewart, who served at Kerever Park for seventeen years, was a qualified primary teacher before she entered in England and Agnes O'Connell had taught in parish schools in New Zealand before coming to Australia.⁴⁰ Another explanation for their being accepted as sisters was that they directly sought it for their own reasons which may have included a desire for reparation. For example, Williams refers to the aristocratic Pauline de Saint André de la Laurencie de Villeneuve who sought to make herself 'a victim for expiation' for the 'scandals' of her family by undertaking such a vocation.⁴¹ An alternative explanation is that they were directed into it by those in authority in the

³⁶ P.R. 3 October 1995. Interview one.

³⁷ Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, p. 191. See also p. 232 for a similar reference.

³⁸ M.F. 5 June 1996. Interview one.

³⁹ Sister Agnes O'Connell was from New Zealand and Sister Evelyn Burke from England.

⁴⁰ P.R. 10 October 1995. Interview two.

⁴¹ Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, p. 291.

Society who considered that their social background was more in keeping with undertaking domestic work rather than teaching in the more exclusive boarding schools.

The sisters lived a separate life from the choir nuns. As with the Stevensons, they had little contact with the children although they were 'intensely' interested in them.⁴² They took their community recreation and spiritual reading time apart from the choir nuns often coming together only for meals and for recreation on Sundays. The work the sisters undertook was physically hard. At Kerever Park, four sisters were variously allocated, under the direction of a choir nun, the work of cooking three meals for at least seventy people,⁴³ laundry and ironing for the same number, cleaning, caring for the sick. This was often under difficult circumstances such as a temporary make-shift kitchen, when a new kitchen was being constructed which meant washing up in buckets outside in winter. Additionally, some undertook supervision of the children in study and recreation periods and in the dormitories. As few young women were attracted to this vocation, the sisters were generally middle aged and older which meant that the work was even more physically challenging.⁴⁴

Erskine Stuart's belief that being an uneducated sister freed them to be 'singularly tenacious of all good and beautiful things' is not in keeping with information reported from those associated with Kerever Park. For example, the Stevensons remembered that one of the sisters used to sit in a spot she had created for herself in the hen house and read the paper.⁴⁵ At this time, only the religious superior read the paper and she cut out

⁴² P.R. 3 October 1995. Interview one.

⁴³ Such cooking extended to making their own butter from the milk for the dairy, making bread, making morning and afternoon teas, as well as special meals for visitors including the daily morning breakfast for the visiting priest.

⁴⁴ P.R. 3 October 1995. Interview one and 10 October 1995. Interview two.

⁴⁵ Enid & Charles Stevenson. 30 June 1996. Interview one.

small snippets for the religious to read.⁴⁶ The sister in question must have redeemed the paper from the rubbish for her own perusal. To guard against being found out, she constructed a small peep hole in the hen house so she could spot unexpected visitors. Another religious, who was a young choir nun at Kerever Park, reported that the sisters often gave extra food to the young religious and offered them emotional support which, in her understanding, 'probably wasn't done'.⁴⁷ In her written 'reminiscences' of her time at Kerever Park, Evelyn Stewart, a coadjutrix sister, includes an example of her resistance to a choir nun. In this example, she was reading a story book to the children at night when the electric light system failed. A choir nun intervened and replaced the story book with the lives of Saint Alphonsus Liguoris and Saint Dominic. 'Just too bad!!!' was her view of this intrusion.⁴⁸

While there is evidence that there was a desire on the part of those in authority to create a school which replicated some aspects of home life, it seems that this home reflected that of the upper classes in which there was a hierarchy of social relationships. The older religious who were at the school over most of its operation, particularly Helen Boydell and Lillian McGee, held the most authority. One religious considered that the outside of the school, the garden, was the province of Helen Boydell while inside was the province of Lillian McGee.⁴⁹ Behind the scenes, the sisters and the employed workers undertook the domestic and farm work. Social distance between the various levels, especially between the children and those engaged in domestic work, was maintained, reflecting the classist arrangement of this family.

⁴⁶ E.R. 2 September 1995. Interview two.

⁴⁷ D.G. 1 April 1996. Interview one.

⁴⁸ Evelyn Stewart, *Reminiscences of KP for Sr L. McGee*, unpublished material, no date, Rose Bay archives, Sydney. This was written after Kerever Park closed in 1965 and before Lillian McGee's death in 1982.

⁴⁹ E.B. 2 August 1995. Interview one.

Early Reflections

By 1944, Kerever Park had been established in a permanent property as a preparatory boarding school for approximately forty-four children (Appendix VII). Over the next few years, a number of articles appeared in *Cor Unum*, the school journal of Rose Bay Convent. In these texts the school is represented as an ideal setting for a happy childhood.

The first article published in *Cor Unum* was in the 1945-1946 edition. The author is anonymous and it may be hypothesised, especially by the use of French terms, that she was a member of the Society. All teaching religious were literate in French, although of course, to varying degrees. There is, however, no direct evidence for this assumption.

A nostalgic air has been incorporated into the article - a nostalgia that, perhaps, grows out of early aspirations for the school but also touches on illusions of the security of childhood and the safety of the past located in an English environment. While Mother McGuinness may have used her childhood experiences as a way of entering into the child's perspective, there is no indication of a similar process being employed by this writer. No suggestion arises in any of the text that the children could experience difficulties or complexities beyond the minor scratch. The anticipated audience of this article may also have contributed significantly to the author's construction of Kerever Park. The journal, *Cor Unum*, would have been read by ex-students, including those who currently sent their children to Kerever Park as well as prospective parents, parents who would be reassured by the emphasis on family life and notions of happy childhood.

Turn off that quiet country road into a still more peaceful path that ends near a gaily painted iron gate with neat brick pillars ... Something familiar about that gate? Yes, of course! Successor to the old green wooden one, and forerunner of the present handsome grille, it admitted generations of children to Rose Bay. So, right from the outset, we find that Kérever Park is but Rose

Bay transplanted and grown young, with a charm of personality that is all its own.⁵⁰

The article continues in an idealised mode, with the children finding only happiness and success in this setting.

Real country children, every one of them, they throw themselves wholeheartedly into every scheme of work or play. They never need a holiday at school, for their day is full of enchantment, since everything is new, and therefore enjoyable . . . there is an air of contentment, of control without constraint that is the ideal setting for a happy childhood, a home feeling that children are quick to sense ... Lessons are not only not neglected, they are keenly enjoyed. Singing class is a delight, the physical culture hour is the best of fun, and there is no reward to compare with the privilege of acting Bible stories.⁵¹

At night, the children are cared for as a 'mother' would care for them: tucking them into bed, attending to bodily ailments and managing to teach a simple French lesson in the process. 'Oftener than not, "Mummy" is an old child of Rose Bay or Kincoppal.'⁵² Perhaps we may infer that the children's success in lessons is due, in part, to the early formation of the children in the Sacred Heart tradition by their ex-student mothers.

The article concludes that life at Kerever Park has become a haven of happiness; life is only sunny, as an idealised childhood should be, and there is no room for dissenting voices.

Kerever Park is dedicated to the Holy Family, to Jesus, Mary and Joseph; the sundial before its door marks none but the sunny hours; its garden path winds upward from the former Rose Bay gate to Rose Bay itself; surely its children go ever up, and their path is definitely a garden path.⁵³

⁵⁰ Author anonymous, 'Kerever Park, Burradoo', *Cor Unum: the chronicle of the convents of the Sacred Heart Australia*, vol. 1, 1945-1946, p. 89.

⁵¹ *ibid.* p. 90.

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.* p. 91.

At the heart of this description is, as Madeleine Grumet expresses it, 'the careful balance of order and disorder, the planned and the spontaneous', the renaissance concept of *sprezzatura* - the art of presenting achievement without seeming effort - which 'is embodied in the grace and ease of the happy childhood'.⁵⁴

Similar articles in *Cor Unum* follow. A 'letter' from the children published in 1946 is written in the same vein. In this second article, reference is made to special feast days, the farm animals, parents' day, and lessons, including music lessons, 'we love our lessons with her' [the music teacher].⁵⁵ In 1950, a third article appears called 'At Home at Kerever Park' which includes a number of pictures of the gardens, the farm animals, the children riding and class photos (Figure 4). As with the first two articles, Kerever Park is cast as the ideal setting in which to educate a child, yet beyond the rhetoric all three articles reveal the potential of an intimate lifestyle made possible by such a small setting: the chance for close attention from a religious as they go to bed, riding lessons, interaction with farm animals and small classes. Indeed, a picture of kindergarten and first class (called Tenth and Elementary classes in the European manner) shows a total of ten children in these two classes. This third article includes reference to the arrival of the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting. The image of childhood in this text is one of innocence reflected in 'the beauty of the little ones . . . arms folded across their breast' in a secure home which is described as 'surely the ante-chamber of Heaven'.⁵⁶ This discourse of innocent childhood has also been incorporated into a series of religious pictures (holy cards as they were termed, given by the religious to the children on special occasions and by the children to each other) also designed by Mother Margaret Nealis who

⁵⁴ Madeleine R. Grumet, 'Curriculum and the art of daily life', in George Willis & William H. Schubert (eds), *Reflections from the heart of educational inquiry: understanding curriculum and teaching through the arts*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1991, p. 82.

⁵⁵ Juniors of Kerever Park, 'Kerever Park', *Cor Unum; the chronicle of the convents of the Sacred Heart Australia*, vol. 2, 1946, p. 93.

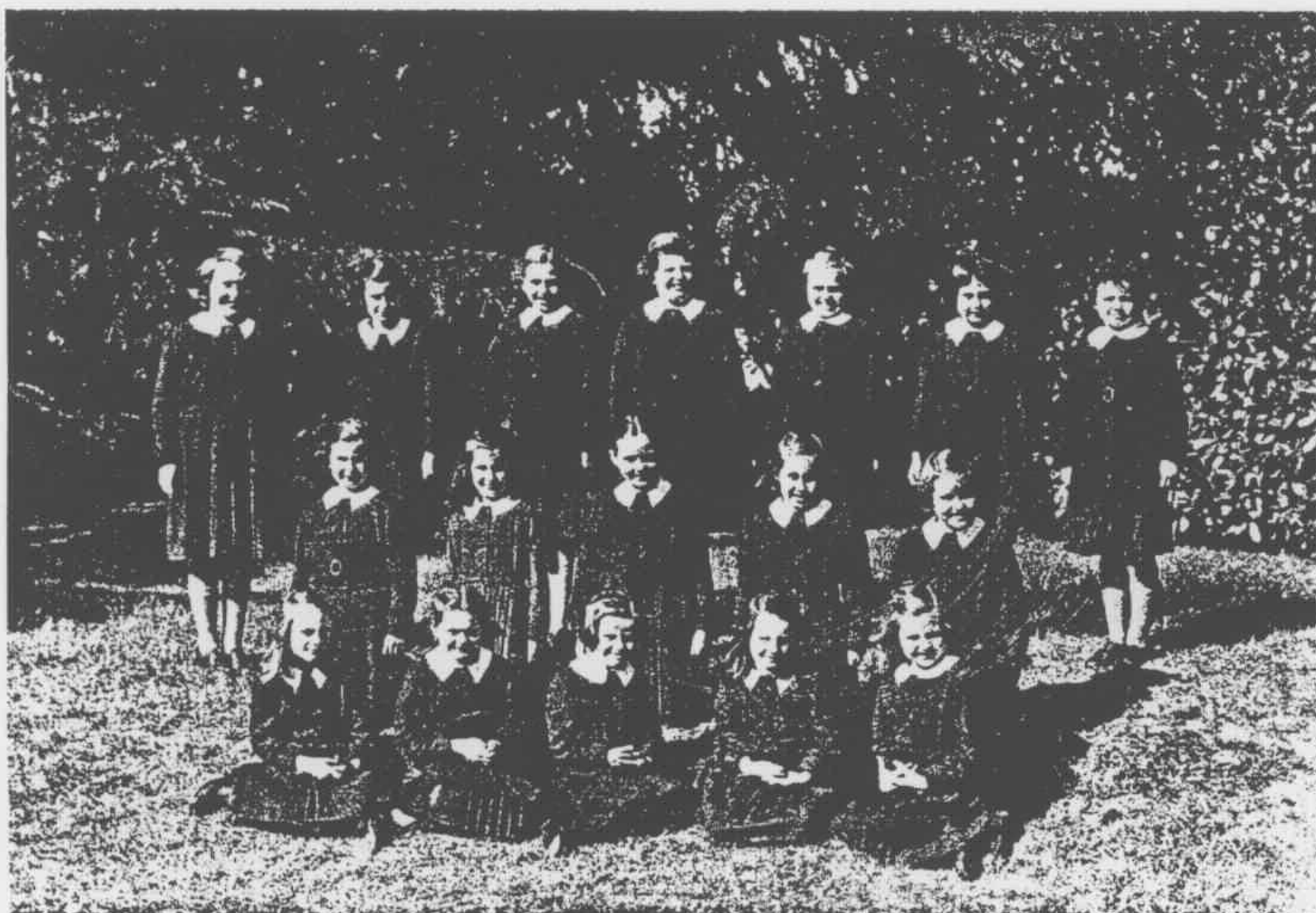
⁵⁶ Author anonymous, 'At home at Kerever Park', p. 73.



Some of the Cricket XI



Young Horsewomen



Welcome Additions to Kerever Park in 1950

Figure 4: 'At Home at Kerever Park.' 1950

completed the Sancta Magdalena Sophia painting (Figure 5).⁵⁷

In these early days of the school's existence, the discourse of happy and innocent childhood, secreted away from the hardness of everyday life, has taken strong root. Given that they were written within the early period of the school's life, this may not be surprising and the genre of 'happy childhood' is well entrenched in English writing. English parents, particularly mothers of the last century, had been advised by Mrs Beeton in her well consulted book on household management to 'make her child feel that home is the happiest place in the world'.⁵⁸ However, this discourse was also given currency in the 1950s. Ester Faye has provided a review of the work of historians Carolyn Steedman, Valerie Walkerdine and Jacqueline Rose who generally argue that in the post-war period children became the repositories of hopes, desires and fantasies for a world free from the forces of hatred and fear which had driven the war years. Democracy had won and in the new social order which would rise from the ashes of the war, children would be happy as well as innocent and safe from such traumas. These children would also provide the building blocks in the continued victory of democracy.

In that 'terrifying fiction - a fiction of freedom and safety and happiness' in which the collective hopes for 'a better world - a world free from hate and fear' are invested in the 'innocence of children', children are pinned down *as children* to serve, as Steedman puts it, as episodes in the western nation's narrative of democracy and freedom. On this question of cultural and national narratives, Jacqueline Rose has written that in 'fantasies which our own culture continues to perpetuate - about its own worth, its future and its traditions - ... the child serves above all as fantasy'. And in the dialectic of desire constructed in such cultural fantasies of collective representation and consolidation, children come to stand in for what

⁵⁷ These cards were kept by an ex-student from her time at the school.

⁵⁸ Cited in Priscilla Robertson, 'The home as a nest', in Lloyd de Mause (ed.), *The history of childhood*, London, Condor, 1974, p. 423. Robertson also notes here that despite such advice there is evidence that English parents, especially middle class parents, did not foster close relationships with their children.

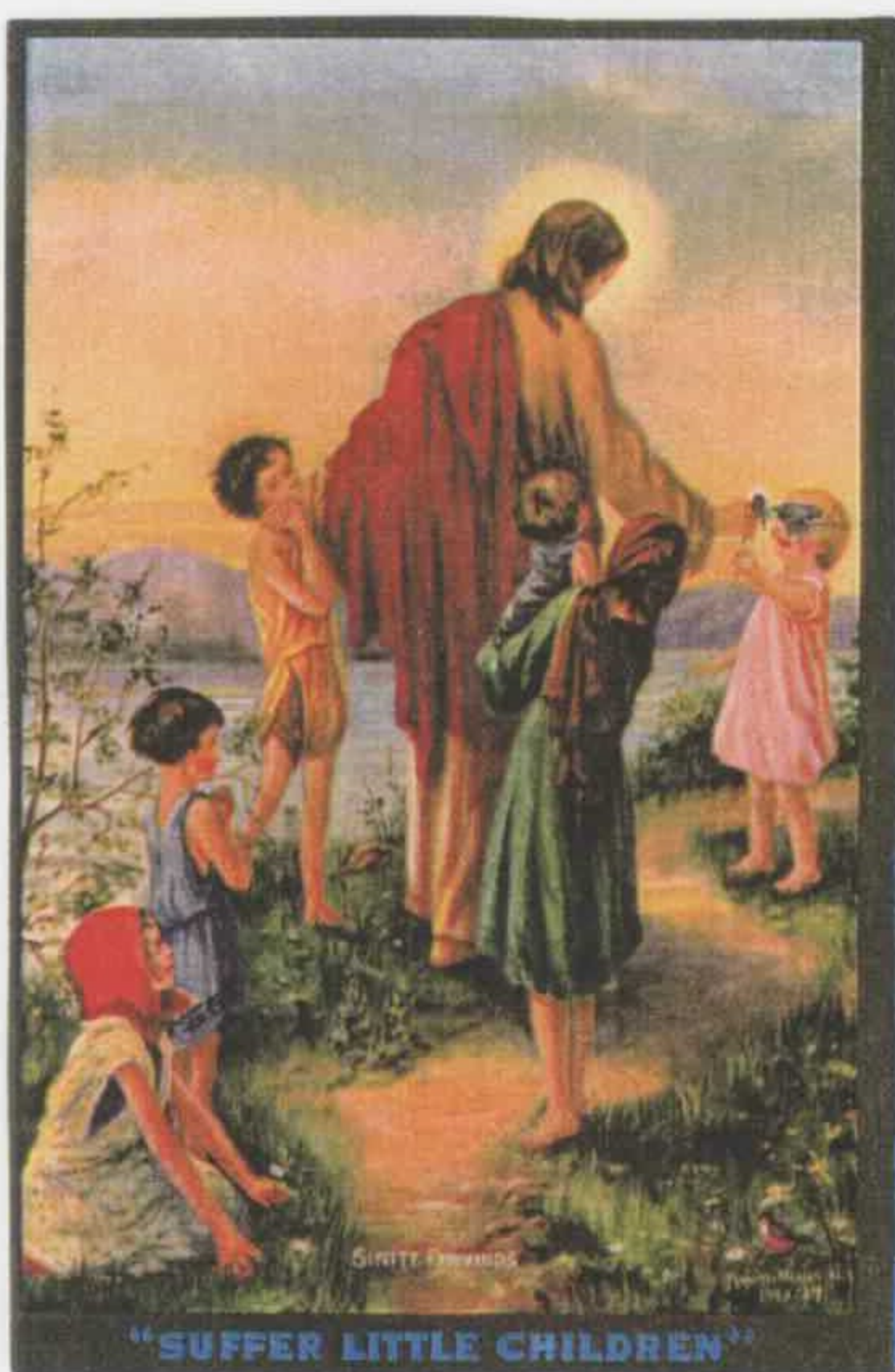


Figure 5 : Holy Cards by Mother Margaret Nealis.

is imagined as lost, yet immanent, in the lives of adults in western liberal cultures.⁵⁹

Statistical trends in the birth rate in the post-war period, a trend which continued into the 1960s, reveal that men and women married at an earlier age and that there was a higher level of childbearing.⁶⁰ While women were mobilised into the armed forces during World War Two, Kay Saunders and Geoffrey Bolton conclude that 'the ideology of women's central vocation in the private arena . . . was not challenged and reformulated' in this period.⁶¹

Kerever Park, begun as a space in which children would be safe during the war, established in the discourse of happy childhood secure in a country home where they were educated by religious totally given to God, represented a setting in which such cultural fantasies might be fulfilled. That a writer in the post war period might write in the idealised genre of the *Cor Unum* articles, is no surprise. However, hope might be held that material coming from a later time and, in particular, from a historical perspective might offer a different view; however, the ideal persists even in historical writing.

Other Stories

Williams's 1978 history of the order contains a brief reference to Kerever Park which continues the 'ante-chamber of Heaven' theme casting it as a

⁵⁹ Ester Faye, Growing up 'Australian', unpublished paper presented at the 26th annual conference of the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society, Childhood Citizenship Culture, QUT, Brisbane, July 1996, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁰ Peter McDonald, Lado Ruzicka & Patricia Pyne, 'Marriage, fertility and mortality', in Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians: historical statistics*, Sydney, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987, p. 43. The mean age for marriage for young women from 1921 until 1946 was 24 and over (for men it was 27 and over), this mean age dropped to 23.3 in 1951 and fell to 21.9 in 1971 (24.6 for men in that year). See p. 46. The birth rate in Australia in 1950 jumped to 190 591 as compared to 160 560 in 1945. See p. 51.

⁶¹ Kay Saunders & Geoffrey Bolton, 'Girdled for war: women's mobilisation in World War Two', in Kay Saunders & Geoffrey Bolton, *Gender relations in Australia: domination and negotiation*, Sydney, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992, p. 395.

'garden paradise'.⁶² In her 1982 history of Rose Bay Convent, Barlow also includes a brief reference to the school couched in similar terms. While her text is written as a history, her reference to the school is located more in discourses of aspiration than in discourses located in experience and outcomes. Kerever Park is referred to as an 'ideal milieu' in which future children of Rose Bay could be educated in Madeleine Sophie's tradition: 'awareness of being loved, freedom to be oneself and education through a happy collaboration in work and play'.⁶³ There is no discussion as to how this judgement was arrived at and no reference to any interviews being conducted with past students. In Barlow's writing, the focus on childhood has shifted from 'innocence' towards a Rousseauian notion of the naturally good child, this goodness presenting itself when the child is educated in an appropriate environment. Here the school is judged to be a success in achieving its early goals: the creation of a preparatory school in a milieu of happy, secure country living in which the children would be exposed at an early age to the Sacred Heart tradition with Mother McGee providing the family focus as a mother figure. In Barlow's history, there is no hint of any tension between a desire to make Kerever Park a happy home for young children where a child was 'free to be oneself' and the demands of the educational discourses of the Society. Yet over the early period of the school's existence in the permanent foundation, changes had taken place in the structuring of the space and in the way in which the school functioned.

In the first years, the school consisted mainly of the original buildings which were part of Knoyle, although even at this stage a fibro room, bought from an 'evacuation abode' in Bundanoon, has been added to the back of the building as the children's study room⁶⁴ (Figure 6). It had been designed as a large country home and it remained as such in the first few years. This meant that the children slept together in bedrooms which

⁶² Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, p. 211.

⁶³ Barlow, p. 92.

⁶⁴ House journal, 3 January 1944. The study room was demolished after the school closed.

accommodated four or so and which were intended as bedrooms and decorated as such. The grounds of the school were mainly at the front so that the children played in the park area surrounded by the formal gardens and the large fir trees. Cricket was often played here with children diving among the trees in search of lost balls. Mrs Fitzharding continued to bring the horses in during the week so all could learn how to ride and some children now kept their own horses there, although they were required to share them with the others. The young religious, some of whom were country girls, taught them how to groom the horses, rather as big sisters might. Birthday parties for the younger children were sometimes celebrated on the front verandah including a birthday cake and party hats.⁶⁵ The children were also taken down to the Wingecarribee River which ran along the bottom of the property and some recall watching the nuns kill snakes there. Others remember being given a bucket to collect raspberries with the reinforcement that, if they didn't eat them, they could have them for supper with some cream. One ex-student from that time described it as 'a family business with mothers who looked after us and sisters who cooked for us'.⁶⁶ This description reflects the population from which the majority of students came, middle class homes in which domestic workers were brought into the home to assist the wife/mother with the work associated with large families - none of the ex-students interviewed came from families of less than four children. The husband/father was absent, being engaged in business or work associated with running a property. The smallness of the school numbers, being approximately forty-four in the early years, the design of the school space, the low staff/student ratio (see Appendix VIII), coupled with Mother McGuinness's motivations for founding the school, allowed the discourse of school as home to find some expression in the day to day school life there.

⁶⁵ M.F. 5 June 1996. Interview one.

⁶⁶ E.B. 9 August 1995. Interview one.



Figure 6 : The Original Building - Knoyle. 1997



Figure 7 : Later Additions - Dormitory. 1997

The need to extend the school numbers in order to make it economically viable (the numbers rose to fifty-four in 1948 and peaked at sixty-six in 1956 - see Appendix VIII) led to a need to create larger spaces and resulted in extensions being completed at the end of 1947.⁶⁷ A chapel and large dormitory upstairs as well as a sizeable dining room downstairs were added to the right-hand side of the house. These first extensions were in keeping with the original style of the house and did not detract from the Queen Anne architecture but the outcome was that the school now became more institutional. In 1950, a swap of fourteen acres of land with a neighbour⁶⁸ meant that the children could now play at the back of the school rather than in the formal garden area at the front of the house. This new area, called Mary's Meadow, brought a sharper distinction between the front public areas and the back children's areas.

In the following years, two large brick dormitories and attached bathroom blocks as well larger quarters for the nuns were added to the building. (Figure 7 shows one of the dormitories.) Another storey was added to it in 1962 when the study room was moved into the dormitory at the bottom of the building.⁶⁹ By the time I arrived as a student in 1957, the children were confined to the back play areas either outside the study room for recess and lunch play (Figures 8 & 9)⁷⁰ or in the large paddock down a short lane for afternoon play.⁷¹ Most slept in one of the three large dormitories either upstairs beside the chapel or in two large brick buildings at the back of the school. The smaller children slept in an open dormitory while older children had partitions between them and curtains at the front of their 'alcoves', as they were called. Next to their beds was a

⁶⁷ House journal, September 1947.

⁶⁸ John Fagan, The story of Mary's Meadow, unpublished material, 22 August 1982, Rose Bay archives, Sydney.

⁶⁹ House journal, 1962.

⁷⁰ These two photographs were taken by me while at the school. I have a number which show children playing in the back areas, as in Figure 9. However, we were only allowed in the front area if accompanied by a religious, as in Figure 8, or on special feast days.

⁷¹ This area has since been sold for development.

small cupboard, for the few items they were allowed to keep, and a chair on which they placed their clothes when they undressed. The children now played on the concrete area beside the back study room or in Mary's Meadow, down the back lane, in the afternoon period. A tennis court and permanent posts for the game of Rounders led to part of the afternoon recreation being spent playing different organised games, which were perhaps considered to be more in keeping with girls, and cricket eventually ceased. The front garden was now out of bounds unless the children were taken there by the nuns. Riding lessons had ceased and the children were not allowed to have their own horses at school. Birthdays were no longer celebrated as a whole school, excursions to the river were rare and the school moved into a more institutional form of organisation in which other educational discourses prevailed over the discourse of school as home. In this period, Mother McGee allowed the children to change into ordinary play clothes for afternoon recreation, perhaps in an attempt to restore a more home-like quality, but the physical structure of the school which now existed indicated that different educational discourses had taken firm hold.

The new buildings were all located at the back and were not in keeping with the Queen Anne style of architecture, rather they were in keeping with an institutional style of architecture - large, rectangular spaces, devoid of any decorative quality both inside and out. While the front of the school maintained a homely exterior, the back of the school took on a more institutional character and the children were generally confined to this area.

Competing Educational Discourses

In the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting, Madeleine Sophie stands in front of a statue of the Sacred Heart. In one hand, she holds the cross which hangs around her neck; in the other, she holds a book, with a picture of Mater Admirabilis, open to the three children. The child who is



Figure 8 : Religious and Student in Formal Grounds, c. 1959



Figure 9 : Children Playing Outside Study Room, c. 1959

nearest to her, and who is pointing to the picture, is wearing a pink sash around her uniform. These pink sashes were distributed to children as a sign of their good behaviour. The other two children are holding closed books under their arms. This picture contains all the elements of the pedagogic discourses of Kerever Park: education in service of God (the Sacred Heart statue oversees all), education oriented to the traditional role of women (the children's attention is drawn to the Mater Admirabilis icon), children aspiring to perfection (the child wearing the pink ribbon), intellectual rigour (the children carry books under their arms) - all of this is conveyed through the model religious, who expresses her love through sacrifice and suffering (Madeleine Sophie holds the cross).

The educational aspirations of and curriculum taught in Sacred Heart boarding schools were contained in their Plans of Study. The first Plan was drawn up in 1805, during the time of Madeleine Sophie by the founding mothers who, according to O'Leary, owed their 'allegiance to Benedictines, Ursulines, Visitation nuns, and to Madame de Maintenon'.⁷² Williams also acknowledges these influences and extends it to include, as does O'Leary later in her work, the influence of the Jesuits.⁷³ These Plans have undergone a number of revisions but they are used as the basic source of educational discourse in Sacred Heart schools.

In the 1833 Plan of Studies, the ideal Sacred Heart child is defined. In this extract it is possible to see the four characteristics which are present in the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting: education in service of God, education oriented to the traditional role of women, aspiring to perfection, and the aspiration of intellectual rigour focused on the teachings of the Church.

A child of the Sacred Heart . . . should be outstanding in the world for a mind adorned with useful and varied knowledge, but

⁷² Mary O'Leary, *Education with a tradition: an account of the educational work of the Society of the Sacred Heart*, London, University of London Press, 1936, p. 100.

⁷³ O'Leary has provided a substantial work on the origins of Sacred Heart education, locating, in particular, the influences of the pre-revolutionary period. It is not in the bounds of this thesis to re-establish these origins.

enlightened by a pure, bright light of faith - as the most important of all sciences are those of religion and salvation. Her heart should be formed to solid virtues . . . and delicate sentiments. Her character should be upright, disciplined, free from any defects that nature or early training may have left her. Her manner should be sweet, attractive, polished and her whole exterior marked by that air of modesty and kindness which disposes others in favor of virtue.⁷⁴

The Plan which was most relevant to the period in which Kerever Park existed was the Plan of 1922 (adapted to English in 1931). In 1958, towards the end of the period in which Kerever Park operated, a new Plan was adopted. Unlike the earlier plan, the 1958 Plan did not aspire to include curriculum but rather to describe the 'spirit' of Sacred Heart schools, leaving out curriculum matters, which were to be developed in keeping with national differences. These Plans will be drawn upon in the following discussion of the educational aspirations of Sacred Heart education as exemplified at Kerever Park.

Education in Service of God

In the matter of education, Madeleine Sophie is considered to have been intransigent about putting the spiritual end of education first. 'Whenever you teach, do not fail to speak of Jesus Christ', she is reported to have said.⁷⁵ Life after death was the ultimate goal of any education.

A worldly education would give us a lot of trouble for nothing and what would become of souls? In these times marked by lack of faith and by indifference, what is needed is to found the children on principles, to impress them by a revelation of the truths of religion, to insist upon the shortness of life, the two eternities, the vanity of the things of this world when they have no reference to salvation.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Cited in Nikola Baumgarten, 'Education and democracy in frontier St Louis: the Society of the Sacred Heart', *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1994, pp. 190-191.

⁷⁵ Margaret Williams, *Saint Madeleine Sophie: her life and letters*, New York, Herder & Herder, 1965, p. 464.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

All subjects, including history,⁷⁷ served a similar purpose, as demonstrated by the extract from a Kerever Park children's 'feast book' (1952)⁷⁸ (Figure 10). Yet while subjects may serve their purpose in contributing to the discourse of education in service of God, the ultimate goal was to produce women who, through family life, would produce souls for God.⁷⁹ Erskine Stuart, in her 1911 treatise on *The Education of Catholic Girls*, encouraged a similar focus, especially in the education of young children.

To be well grounded in the elements of faith, and to have been so taught that the practice of religion has become the atmosphere of a happy life, to have the habit of sanctifying daily duties, joys, and trials by the thought of God, and a firm resolve that nothing shall be allowed to draw the soul away from Him, such is, broadly speaking, the aim we may set before ourselves for the end of the years of childhood, after which must follow the more difficult years of the training of youth.⁸⁰

The focus on education in service of God is reflected in the 1922 Plan of Studies and includes a quotation from Mother Digby, superior general of the order from 1895 until 1911, to lend weight to this focus. In this discourse, there is little room for notions of school as home.

Such is the ideal of our education, an ideal which is gathered both from the text of our Constitutions and from the teaching of our First Mothers. In a Circular Letter of January 13th 1898, our Venerated Mother Digby expressed it as follows: ' . . . Strong studies in accordance with the spirit of our Plan; sustained effort on the part of the Mistresses and children; seriousness, which develops the mind: sure and deep principles to direct the will and keep the heart for God - these are the things we need for the education of our children, who are all too prone to take prettiness for beauty, and the interesting for the true. To bring up children does not mean to amuse them, but to take possession of each

⁷⁷ *ibid.* p. 461.

⁷⁸ Feast Books were special books prepared by each child to be presented to the reverend mother or mistress general of the school on their feast days.

⁷⁹ Margaret Williams, *Saint Madeleine Sophie: her life and letters*, New York, Herder & Herder, 1965, p. 464.

⁸⁰ Janet Erskine Stuart, *The education of Catholic girls*, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1911, p. 11.

faculty and of each talent in the Name of God; to guide them through the weaknesses of childhood, so that they may give back with usury, all the gifts they have received to their Creator'.⁸¹

The 1958 Spirit and Plan of Studies marks a change in the nature of the Plans. This Plan was called the 'Spirit and Plan' and is characterised by a reduction in syllabus directions as 'they are bound to vary according to time and place'.⁸² Earlier plans were for boarding schools not for free schools which were run by the order in some countries. This Plan is intended to contain the 'spirit' or epistemological basis on which education in boarding schools, free schools, training colleges and university colleges was to be based. Still, the first section of this Plan which refers to 'Education - Supernatural End', continues to stress the discourse of education in service of God. Unlike earlier Plans, this one draws more widely on sources other than those written by members of the order with especial attention being given to the writings of the popes. One quotation from Pope Pius XI refers to education being essentially about 'preparing man for what he must be and what he must do here below in order to attain the end for which he was created'.⁸³ A quotation from Pius XII acknowledges the role of the person in being a citizen as well as a Catholic: 'What characterizes Christian education is that it aims constantly at the overall training of the child and of the adolescent, with the end of making him into a man, citizen, a complete and balanced Catholic.'⁸⁴ In reading this, it is difficult to imagine how members of an enclosed order who did not read the newspaper and who were told how to vote, as they were at Kerever Park,⁸⁵ might contribute to the goal of informed citizenship. In contrast, examination of the pedagogic discourses of Sacred Heart education gives clear evidence as to how they intended to

⁸¹ Society of the Sacred Heart, *Plan of studies of the boarding schools of the Society of the Sacred Heart*, translated from the French edition, Roehampton, 1931 [1922], p. v.

⁸² Society of the Sacred Heart, *Spirit and plan of studies in the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, Farnborough Hants, St Michael's Abbey Press, 1958, p.7.

⁸³ *ibid.* p. 12.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ E.B. 18 August 1995. Interview two.

educate for citizenship of the Church - citizenship expressed through obedience.

In the 1922 Plan, the importance of the junior years as a time when impressions of faith and piety are made, is stressed. Also stressed here is the central role of the religious in providing a perfect model for these young children to learn to revere the religious.

1. JUNIOR CLASSES.

(Elementary to 7th classes.)

MORAL IMPORTANCE OF THESE CLASSES. 'The Mistresses in charge of the youngest children should have a very special esteem for their duties and should set themselves to fulfil them with all the care of which they are capable, bearing in mind the tenderness of the Heart of Jesus for little children and never forgetting that the whole success of education depends, as a rule, on its beginnings. Ineffable impressions are then made on the heart, impressions of faith and piety, impressions too of reverence for Mistresses who are truly religious and whose chief care is to safeguard or revive the grace of Baptism in these little hearts.' (Plan of Studies of 1850).⁸⁶

In both documents, religion is placed first in the arrangement of chapters given over to the various subjects. In the 1922 document, it is stated that 'the teaching of Religion, of its history, its dogmas, its moral code is the basis and the most important part of the instruction, as well as of the education which we give to our children'.⁸⁷

The scope of religious instruction included the dogma and teachings of the Church, scriptural and Church history, and readings from scripture and some acquaintance with liturgy.⁸⁸ At Kerever Park, the dogma and teachings of the Church were mainly imparted through the Green Catechism. In *Rockchoppers: growing up Catholic in Australia*, Edmund Campion stresses that in the culture of Irish-Australian Catholicism,

⁸⁶ Society of the Sacred Heart, *Plan of studies*, 1922, pp. 14-15.

⁸⁷ *ibid.* p. 29.

⁸⁸ *ibid.* pp. 3-31.

'obedience and docility were fostered'⁸⁹ and 'the certain certainties of the catechism helped create the unquestioning docility of mind which had been a characteristic of Australian Catholicism'.⁹⁰ Campion includes examples which are characteristic of the Green Catechism format, examples easily rattled off by any of us who experienced learning it.

Q. Who made the world?

A. God made the world.

Q. Who is God?

A. God is the Creator of heaven and earth and of all things and the Supreme Lord of all.

Q. How do we know that there is a God?

A. We know that there is a God by the things that He made.⁹¹

Scriptural history and the history of the Church were mainly transmitted through exploration of bible stories, especially the gospels, the history of the Society and through the lives of the saints. A 1948 document on school regulations for Sacred Heart schools in Australia stressed the place of such reading.⁹²

At Kerever Park, children were required to read spiritual books on Sunday mornings before they went out with visitors. During the week, they had a form of spiritual reading much as the religious did. The children sat and sewed, usually darning their stockings, while Mother McGee would read spiritual stories to them, often taken from Catholic journals like *Ave Maria*. These included stories of children who were rather like martyrs and often died upholding the faith and doing the right thing.⁹³ Knowledge of scripture was encouraged by being required to

⁸⁹ Edmund Campion, *Rockchoppers: growing up Catholic in Australia*, Melbourne, Penguin, 1982, p. 64.

⁹⁰ *ibid.* p. 70.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² Society of the Sacred Heart, Meetings concerning school regulations, held at Rose Bay, Sydney, December 29th 1947 - January 5th 1948, unpublished material, Rose Bay archives, Sydney, p. 18.

⁹³ G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview one.

learn, by heart, the gospel of the week. Extensive time was given to preparing children for the sacraments of confession, communion and confirmation in times beyond the normal daily Christian Doctrine (religion) class. Mass, then said in Latin, was attended at least three times a week, confession on Saturday afternoon, Benediction on Sundays, and the rosary generally said each day. The children were encouraged to be introspective and to think about their failings, rather like the examination of conscience the religious practised every day.⁹⁴ Congregations, similar to the Children of Mary, were run and a child had to ask to be admitted. When a child finally joined, they would have a weekly meeting with Mother McGee who would read perhaps from scripture and prayers would be said.⁹⁵ In the School Register, a note was made beside the names of children who attained membership of a congregation.⁹⁶ Prayers were said at the beginning and end of every class, before and after meals, on rising and sleeping and visits to the chapel were encouraged. The great feasts of the Church were celebrated, especially those which pertained to the Society of the Sacred Heart, notably the feast of the Sacred Heart and the feast of Saint Madeleine Sophie.⁹⁷ On the days of these last two feasts, school work would be suspended, special games would be played, a film watched and celebratory food consumed - on these days no one got into trouble.⁹⁸

While Mother McGuinness may have intended Kerever Park to provide a home for the young children who were sent there, the reality is that there was far more focus on being socialised into being an obedient member of the family of the Society and the Church and in preparing for the ultimate home - heaven. This intention is reflected in a document attached to the School Rules.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁶ Kerever Park, School register.

⁹⁷ In the House Journal, a great deal of attention is given to the celebration of holy days and feast days.

⁹⁸ E.B. 18 August 1995. Interview two.

The crest, which is your own school crest as a Child of the Sacred Heart, shows you that you are a child, too, of our Immaculate Mother. On it are the two Hearts, and above them the Host with rays of light surrounding it. The two branches of lilies either side suggest that we wish Jesus and His Blessed Mother to keep you close to them, and that you in turn, will never leave Jesus and Mary but will be a delight to them for ever.⁹⁹

The school motto, *Cor Unum*, 'one heart' served, as John Synott and Colin Symes suggest, 'to join one generation of learners to another'¹⁰⁰ as well as acting as a 'linguistic beacon, signalling the school's intention'.¹⁰¹ Examination of the school documents and the narratives of the religious and ex-students provide clear evidence that individuality was to be suppressed in service of the group. One religious stated that she believed the goal of many practices was to curb the children and bring them into line or they might be disruptive of the group.¹⁰²

In the 1948 School Regulations document reference is made to characteristics which would produce, as Champion suggests, obedient and docile citizens of the Church.

Instability of will, lack of concentration in the mind and of moral standards in the conscience, a growing tendency to compromise and to take the line of least resistance, a demand for independence and for the initiative, which is combined with self-assurance; a lessening of respect and loyalty; these are tendencies which nevertheless clash in them with the desire of doing better, with generous enthusiasms and with a need of help, of understanding and of sympathy, which, however, must not interfere with their independence.

These opposing tendencies give rise to a most complex problem, which the educator must face by never losing sight of the fundamental principles which should be deeply rooted in the souls of the children.

⁹⁹ Kerever Park, Rule of the school, unpublished material, Rose Bay archives, Sydney, no date, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ John Synott & Colin Symes, 'The genealogy of the school: an iconography of badges and mottoes', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1995, p. 139.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* p. 145.

¹⁰² M.D. 25 September 1995. Interview two.

We must give rise to and develop in them the Christian ideas of authority and of respect; of duty and of obedience; of responsibility and of influence; of the sense of moral principle and of loyalty; of effort and of sacrifice; of the service and the duty we owe to God and to other people.¹⁰³

The same document also provides evidence for the argument that it was intended that the children come to see the Society as family. 'Family Spirit,' it is recorded, 'is greatly helped by meetings with the Mistress General at which she gives news of the Society'.¹⁰⁴ The first sentence of the Rule of the School for Kerever Park also reinforces this notion that a child entering the school enters a family which she must love, be loyal to and obedient within.

As a Child of the Sacred Heart you now form part of a large family, to which it is a great grace to belong. You will be very happy in this family, and will draw down even more graces upon it, if you live in it like a true child of such a family. To do so you must love it, and be loyal to it. If you do this you will be a true Child of the Sacred Heart, and of the Queen of Angels.¹⁰⁵

Not all children were obedient. A note was made in the School Register beside the names of twelve children, that they were 'not satisfactory' or asked to leave.¹⁰⁶

The children's contact with their parents was closely monitored and mediated. Letters from home were opened and read before they were handed on to the children. Similarly, the children's letters to home were carefully scripted, being written first in draft copy, corrected, then completed in final copy, allowing little freedom for spontaneous outpourings. If they wished to write an extra letter any week, permission had to be sought from the mistress general and thank you letters were to be written for 'gifts' (usually packages from home) which were sent to the

¹⁰³ Society of the Sacred Heart, Meetings concerning school regulations, pp. 39-40.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.* p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ Kerever Park, Rule of the school.

¹⁰⁶ Kerever Park, School register.

child.¹⁰⁷ When the children returned to school each term, they were required to write a letter thanking their parents for having them over the holidays. One ex-student reported that her mother called these the 'bread and butter letters'.¹⁰⁸ One of the religious interviewed noted that this resulted in some of the children becoming emotionally removed from their parents.¹⁰⁹ Some ex-students interviewed also discussed a feeling of isolation from their families.

The aspirations of Mother McGuinness in founding Kerever Park may have been to provide a home in which the children could learn, but the official documents which pertain to education within a Sacred Heart school allow little room for the discourse of school as home. The children were being prepared for membership in the family of the Society and the Church, and for their ultimate home in the next life. This would be achieved by having a strong faith which was based on obedience, duty, loyalty and responsibility.

Education for the Traditional Role of Women

While the children of Kerever Park were being prepared for membership in the family of the Church, they were not destined to be the leaders of the Church. In contrast, their education was located in the educational epistemology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in which they were to be, as Noeline Kyle expresses it, 'handmaidens of the Church in both their religious and their private lives'¹¹⁰ and to be prepared for 'domesticity, motherhood, community service, voluntarism, modesty, and faith'.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Kerever Park, Rule of the school, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ M.F. 5 June 1996. Interview one.

¹⁰⁹ M.D. 7 September 1995. Interview one.

¹¹⁰ Noeline Kyle, *Her natural destiny: the education of women in New South Wales*, NSW University Press, 1986, p. 69.

¹¹¹ *ibid.* p. 70.

In the introduction to the 1922 Plan of Studies, it is clear that the espoused outcome of Sacred Heart education was to prepare students to be wives and mothers because that is what they were 'destined to become'. Being a wife and mother was considered to be a vocation, a calling from God, expressed through biology: God (Providence) had destined women, through their particular biological make up, to be wives and mothers. The contribution of the Society to this calling was to educate girls so they would be ready to fulfil this vocation.

Knowing as we do that 'in the ordinary course of Providence, our children are destined to become wives and mothers of families' our education endeavours to prepare them to fulfil this vocation as perfectly as may be. It aims therefore at no one-sided training, but rather at the complete and harmonious development of a woman's gifts, so that, as it has been said: 'the girl may grow to the best that a woman ought to be'. It endeavours to send out into the world well-educated girls, that is to say girls who will be ready for the opportunities and responsibilities of their lives; and its details have been planned in the hope that the children may through them come to understand 'the excellence of self-restraint and the loveliness of perfect service'.¹¹²

Reference in this depiction to 'the excellence of self-restraint and the loveliness of perfect service' firmly locates the ideals of this education within the model of the Mater Admirabilis icon, for example, in O'Leary's reference to the 'loveliness of self-government'.¹¹³

O'Leary writes that in painting the Mater Admirabilis icon Pauline Perdrau was 'striving to give life to her conception of the ideals set before the children of the Sacred Heart'.¹¹⁴ In another section, O'Leary states that: 'To the children the painting speaks of delicate and intangible realities which they must guard and cherish as a precious tradition.'¹¹⁵ In Sacred Heart schools, the icon was given a prominent place. Both Rose

¹¹² Society of the Sacred Heart, *Plan of studies*, 1922, p. iv. In this section of the document, weight is added to the argument by a quotation from an unacknowledged document.

¹¹³ O'Leary, p. 316.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.* pp. 315-316.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 317.

Bay and Kincoppal dedicated a separate chapel to the picture. At Kerever Park, Mater Admirabilis was displayed in a front parlour. The ideal given to the children, as indicated in the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting, is that they should be like Mary and the function of the religious was to bring this about. (In the painting, Madeleine Sophie as the ideal religious, brings the children's attention to the icon of Mater Admirabilis.) The pedagogic function and discursive practices of Kerever Park were focused on leading the children to a life of prayer, encouraging them to model themselves on the obedience of Mary, and to act in service of others becoming the keeper of the virtue of others through their own behaviour. These three ideals are reflected in the School Rule.

1. Offer Jesus the first and last moments of each day by reverent Morning and Night Prayers. Talk to Him simply when you visit Him in the Chapel, and remember that He loves you to turn to Him at any time during the day.

2. Take Our Blessed Lady as your model in obedience. Always be very respectful towards all who take God's place for you. Show, by your politeness to all Mistresses and all who look after you, that you are a child who is worthy to be called a "child of the Sacred Heart."

3. Be very kind to other children, ready to help others in the right way. Have the courage to do what you know is right, and thus you will help others by your own good example.

You will be very happy if you follow these three rules, and Jesus and His Blessed Mother will be very happy too.¹¹⁶

The children were ostensibly led to a life of prayer through the many religious practices which dominated their lives. O'Leary links involvement in these religious practices with appropriate manners and behaviours which were in keeping with the upper middle class to which the children belonged.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Kerever Park, Rule of the school, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ Forty percent of the children came from rural properties. See Appendix IX. Two ex-students also discussed the middle class background of the children. M.F. 5 June 1996. Interview one and G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview one.

In addition to the example and the instruction of the nuns, the children were influenced by the ritual of the great feast days of the Church, when they attended Divine Office and saw the ceremonial carried out with due reverence and solemnity. Something of this religious atmosphere was made to pass into their lives, their manners, speech, and tone of voice. Thus the silence and self-control demanded of them, their curtsies to Superiors, their gentleness and self-respect in dress and carriage expressed a definite and high ideal of womanhood, part of the tradition which moulded their lives.¹¹⁸

In this linking of the traditional role of women with religious practices, based on Mary as the model, the children and the religious were led to believe that such behaviour was ordained by God rather than constructed by human consciousness. Similarly, O'Leary hides the human construction of forms of speech and behaviour by linking manners, tone of voice, and forms of dress with religious practices and hence with God. The reader might assume, as does O'Leary, that these behaviours are ordained by God rather than located in a particular place, historical time and social class. As Barthes suggests, 'myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal'.¹¹⁹

The setting of Kerever Park reflected a particular class. Country homes were the prerogative of the rich and, while it was argued by some ex-students that not all children who went to Kerever Park came from rich families,¹²⁰ the setting of the school and the practices there were located in the upper middle class, as discussed previously in this chapter. The conducting of Sacred Heart schools in relatively grand premises has been a part of the tradition of the order - a tradition also based in class. Williams includes a quotation from Madeleine Sophie on the conducting of schools in such settings.

¹¹⁸ O'Leary, p. 65.

¹¹⁹ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, selected and translated by Annette Lavers, London, Vintage, 1993 (1975), p. 142.

¹²⁰ It is recorded in the School Register that eighteen children were on reduced fees. Of this group, twelve entered in 1946.

It is quite painful enough for me to live in old palaces, grandiose chateaux, abbeys and convents saved from revolutionary destruction, without ourselves constructing for the Society houses that are too beautiful. I make exception for beautiful chapels. But for the sake of the children . . .¹²¹

It is in such 'grandiose' settings that these schools have been conducted, including in Australia, as Cave notes.¹²² Williams concludes that the unfinished sentence from this quotation reveals Madeleine Sophie's thought: 'Providence often forced her to accept what she did not like - for the sake of the children.'¹²³

Certain practices associated with the school were peculiar to private schools, not to state schools or to the ordinary systemic Catholic schools. The children boarded - a practice associated with the English practice of public schools for the upper classes. They wore expensive uniforms including hats and gloves. Speech classes and music were optional while ballet was taught by the Misses Kaye (two dancing teachers brought in once a week) to everyone. They curtsied to the reverend mother, the mistress general and to visitors. At recreation, 'dancing or quiet games' were encouraged when they were indoors and 'ugly expressions' were to be penalised.¹²⁴ They wrote thank you letters for social occasions and for gifts.¹²⁵

Yet the discursive practices employed at the school suggest that, while it was accepted that these girls belonged to the upper middle class, which required an education located in the accomplishments, this was not to be a frivolous education. The children were taught how to knit, to sew, to embroider and especially to darn. A yearly prize was given to the best darning. They were given one exercise book, rubber, ruler, pencil and set of

¹²¹ Williams, *Saint Madeleine Sophie*, pp. 349-350.

¹²² Cave, p. 28.

¹²³ Williams, *Saint Madeleine Sophie*, p. 350.

¹²⁴ Society of the Sacred Heart, Meetings concerning school regulations, p. 14.

¹²⁵ Kerever Park, Rule of the school, p. 3.

coloured pencils at a time. These they were to mark clearly, not shared and not lost. Any fancy pens, pencils cases, etc., they might bring back from holidays were soon extracted from them. The simplicity encouraged was in keeping with the life of poverty to which the religious aspired.¹²⁶

The emphasis on simplicity in the educational practices of Sacred Heart schools has its origins in the days of Madeleine Sophie and in particular, as O'Leary argues, in the writings of Fénelon.¹²⁷ It seems likely that Madeleine Sophie would have read the educational treatise of François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, later archbishop of Cumbria. Fénelon, in his 1667 *Treatise of the Education of Girls*, formulated an educational plan based on the premise that a woman's function was the governance of families and aimed to produce 'hard-working, frugal and simple mothers of noble families'.¹²⁸ While he was politically involved in opposition to the institutionalised court and urban salons of his times, he accepted the social stratification of society, viewing it as determined by nature and birth.¹²⁹

Fénelon's exhortations against the vanity of women resonate with Madeleine Sophie's warning that 'women are lost by luxury, guilty pleasures'.¹³⁰ Fénelon wrote: 'Fear nothing so much as vanity in young girls.'¹³¹ In his view, the licentiousness of the court and the centralisation of resources drained the wealth from the provinces leaving the nobility, who pursued such a life-style, and the peasants destitute profiting only the merchants and it was, in his opinion, women's desire for luxury which propagated this desire.¹³² His education would foster simplicity

¹²⁶ S.B. 25 October 1995. Interview one.

¹²⁷ O'Leary, p. 129.

¹²⁸ Carolyn C. Lougee, 'Noblesse, domesticity, and social reform: the education of girls by Fénelon and Saint Cyr', *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. xiv, no. 1, 1974, p. 87.

¹²⁹ Cited in Lougee, p. 90.

¹³⁰ Williams, *Saint Madeleine Sophie*, p. 480.

¹³¹ *ibid.* p. 91.

¹³² *ibid.* pp. 91-92.

amongst women and women would be educated to participate in reforming the nation through agriculture. Madeleine Sophie's pedagogic approach also fostered a similar simplicity but with the ultimate goal of heaven thereby negating the vanities of this world. Yet pragmatically she needed to respect the social order of the day. Those who could afford a boarding school expected an education which was in keeping with their social status both in educational outcomes and the setting of the school.¹³³

In similar vein, the children of Kerever park were taught skills which would contribute to the vocation of motherhood and service to others, especially to those less fortunate.¹³⁴ Once a year, a fete was conducted and the proceeds used for supporting the missions overseas. At one stage they were allowed to 'adopt a black baby' and to support it through their offerings.¹³⁵ At the beginning of term, their pocket money was put away by the nuns and along with the practice of frugality they were discouraged from seeing themselves as superior to others. Point Three of the School Rule states that 'it is not allowed to give holy cards, small presents, etc., for birthdays nor to congratulate for first places in tests, nor for any other reason'.¹³⁶ Prizes were given at the end of the year but this ceremony was attended by the religious only. In the 1948 directive for School Rules, children were to receive a book as a prize unless they 'have themselves offered to sacrifice their prizes for some patriotic or charitable cause'.¹³⁷ The role of motherhood and service to others was to be based on the discourse of conformity and obedience to those in authority, and that of love expressed through sacrifice and suffering, as a direction, contained in the same document, suggests: 'To encourage Christian self-denial at every stage of their education. "By little sacrifices, gently asked of them, we prepare them to make to God, in after-life, the more painful sacrifices

¹³³ In the period in which I attended the school the fees were one hundred guineas per term (three term year). My parents considered it relatively inexpensive.

¹³⁴ M.M. 18 April 1996. Interview one.

¹³⁵ D.G. 1 April 1996. Interview one.

¹³⁶ Kerever Park, Rule of the school, p. 3.

¹³⁷ Society of the Sacred Heart, Meetings concerning school regulations, p. 26.

which conscience will require." ¹³⁸ In their 'free time', the children spent large amounts of time engaged in needlework particularly knitting, embroidery or darning. At one stage, they knitted the beanies for themselves to wear in the winter months.¹³⁹

As future wives, they were initiated into the practice of modesty and removal from any overt sexual behaviour - a practice which was replicated both within the convent and outside it. Once a year, the children processed wearing long white veils and carrying a lily to Our Lady's Grotto where they placed their flower, saying: 'Oh Mary I give you the lily of my heart, be thou its guardian forever.' One of the religious discussed the association of this ritual with purity and continued, in her narrative, to relate the general fear in the Catholic population in the 1940s of sexual behaviour outside marriage. ¹⁴⁰

In the document relating to School Regulations, the religious were advised how to 'safe-guard' the children's modesty.

Modesty. Vigilance to safeguard modesty is recommended to the surveillante, whether in the dormitory or when the children are changing their dresses, etc., but the Mistress General must be consulted so as to ensure a wise discretion and true standards. Deportment is a most important element in this matter of modesty.¹⁴¹

In the large dormitories the children soon learned the practice of getting dressed and undressed using their dressing gowns as a shield against others seeing their bodies.¹⁴² The expression of sexuality, as with other transgressions, was carefully guarded by self-monitoring. The children undertook the sacrament of Confession at about the age of seven. In this process, they learnt to 'examine their consciences' for any failings and to

¹³⁸ *ibid.* p. 41.

¹³⁹ G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview one.

¹⁴⁰ E.B. 18 August 1995. Interview two.

¹⁴¹ Society of the Sacred Heart, Meetings concerning school regulations, p. 5.

¹⁴² I remember this practice being used both at Kerever Park and Rose Bay.

confess them in the confessional box each week. Any behaviours to do with sexuality, obviously referring mainly to masturbation, were referred to as 'impure thoughts' and were considered to be a major sin.¹⁴³ The body became something to be hidden and controlled, with sexuality expressed only within marriage. Our Lady, who provided the model of obedience, respectfulness, politeness and purity, was also the model of tidiness. In Point six of the School Rule the children were asked: 'Should Our Lady visit your desk during the day what would she find?' A tidy desk was to be the response.¹⁴⁴

Sacred Heart education, as it was envisioned in the days of Madeleine Sophie and post-revolutionary France, was about the winning back of the family to the 'love and practice of religion'. This aim is discussed by Baumgarten who draws from the 1815 Constitutions of the Society, to support her point that Sacred Heart education, even that in nineteenth-century St Louis where the children of all social levels were educated by the Society, was located in the traditional model of the domestic woman.

As a result, the Sacred Heart's moral platform, though expressed in religious terms, sounded much like a placard for the Cult of Domesticity. 'Incalculable good' could be done by a 'truly Christian wife and mother who is [was] solidly virtuous and devoted to all her duties.' Husbands could be 'won back to virtue,' and the moral education of children ensured. 'It is through [her] mother,' stated the constitutions, 'that the knowledge, love and practice of religion are transmitted to the next generation. Many other good effects,' they added, 'will be produced in the world by the example of her virtues and her life.'¹⁴⁵

And while the ultimate aim of this education was the gaining of heaven in the next life, in this life it was to produce women who could keep their

¹⁴³ None of the ex-students referred directly to sexuality. This reference is from my own recollections, although one of the religious referred to 'impure thoughts' in association with discussion on the emphasis on purity and stated that it was the major sin. See E.B. 18 August 1996. Interview two.

¹⁴⁴ Kerever Park, Rule of the school, p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ Baumgarten, p. 190.

husbands moral and bring up their children safe within the folds of the Church. This goal, attributed to Madeleine Sophie, was expressed in the 1922 Plan of Studies.

Thus will be realized the desire of Saint Madeleine Sophie 'to make Religion, faith and the kingdom of the Heart of Jesus grow throughout the world by means of these children who will be the women, the wives and the mothers of tomorrow.'¹⁴⁶

In keeping with this goal, one religious expressed it in the following manner.

If they [women] are trained intellectually and morally that power can be used for good and I think that it's amazing what a woman can do, what a good woman can do. That they can influence a whole nation if they get going. May be not as a nation but through the family or whatever. I believe in womanhood and the gifts that women have.¹⁴⁷

Aspiring to Perfection

In the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting, a child wearing a pink sash, a sign of merit, is the one who comes forward from the group of three and who points to the picture of Mater Admirabilis. Aspiring to perfection, as represented by this child, was a central focus in the aspirations of the school. This perfection was located within the model of Mary as represented in the Mater Admirabilis icon. In the 1922 Plan, it is stated that the vocation which the children were destined for was to become wives and mothers. The role of the religious was to prepare them for this vocation as 'perfectly as may be' so that they come to learn 'the excellence of self-restraint and the loveliness of perfect service'.¹⁴⁸ Perfection was located in the practice of self-control arising out of the discourses associated with the ideal spiritual woman who is other-oriented rather than self-oriented. In the Rule of the School, the seven general rules arise

¹⁴⁶ Society of the Sacred Heart, *Plan of studies*, 1922, p. vii.

¹⁴⁷ E.R. 18 August 1995. Interview one.

¹⁴⁸ Society of the Sacred Heart, *Plan of studies*, 1922, p. iv.

out of this model and include: respectfulness, responsibility, thoughtfulness, a lack of pride in self and the practice of self-restraint. This model is also located in the practices of the middle class, as demonstrated by the emphasis on manners especially in social occasions outside the school.

General Rules

1. If you wish to write an extra letter any week, you should ask Reverend Mother's permission for this. Write it then in the week-end. Thank by letter if you receive a gift by the post. If you have been invited out for the day, or half-day, write to thank for this soon after your return.
2. Be very tidy when you are going out, and make sure you are wearing gloves and have all you need before going to the Parlour. Watch your manners especially at such times.
3. It is not allowed to give holy cards, small presents, etc. for birthdays, nor to congratulate for first place in tests, nor for any other reason. If you are given any card you should not accept it, for this is never allowed.
4. When you need another pencil, or have lost a rubber, etc. you should let your Class Mistress know. Others may not ask you for a loan of anything whatsoever, nor may you borrow from anyone. If your things are clearly marked they will not remain lost for long.
5. Books taken from the new reference shelf in the Study Room may be taken when your Study is finished, but should not be kept in your desk overnight. Story books may be taken from Friday 5.30 Study until Monday morning. A story book should never be found in your desk during the week.
6. Should Our Lady visit your desk during the day what would she find? Try to keep it tidy by putting things back tidily each time you return books to it.
7. Be thoughtful for others in the Study Room, by foreseeing your needs at the beginning of studies. If you finish one exercise keep it in your desk till the end of the study then put it on the shelf.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Kerever Park, Rule of the school, pp. 3-4.

There was also a separate set of rules for recreation time. This begins with an exhortation to join in playing an organised game and to 'play your best'.¹⁵⁰ Self-monitoring was also at the core of these rules as illustrated in the following statement.

When recreations are on the concrete, all should play on the concrete, on the gravel, or on the Study Room verandah. It is not allowed to play beyond these limits . . . you can always judge them by saying . . . can the Mistress who is standing on the concrete see us here? If she could not then you should not be where you are.¹⁵¹

This drive to produce students who are self-monitoring illustrates Foucault's analysis of discursive practices in the period following the French Revolution. This period saw, as Foucault argues, a movement from social control through massive but infrequent exercises of destructive force such as public executions, towards the 'uninterrupted constraints imposed in practices of discipline and training' which form the 'gestures, actions, habits and skills' of the people.¹⁵²

The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it . . . It defined how one may have hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies.¹⁵³

In Foucault's thesis, the individual turns herself/himself into a subject and enters into a construction of self which is in keeping with the demands of the culture and social group.¹⁵⁴ Hence the person becomes subject not only to others but also to herself/himself.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 4.

¹⁵¹ Kerever Park, Rule of the school, p. 4.

¹⁵² Joseph Rouse, 'Power/knowledge', in Gary Gutting (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Foucault*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 94-95.

¹⁵³ Cited in Rouse, p. 95.

¹⁵⁴ Cited in Lois McNay, *Foucault and feminism*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992, p. 61.

There are two meanings of the word subject, subject of someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.¹⁵⁵

Foucault suggests that the mechanisms for such control had long been in existence, such as in monasteries and armies, but in the eighteenth century they became general forms of domination. He argues that these 'disciplines' (Foucault's term) of self control were different from the asceticisms of the monasteries 'whose function was to obtain renunciations rather than increases of utility and which, although they involved obedience to others, had as their principal aim an increase of the mastery of each individual over his body'.¹⁵⁶ In the modern period, these old mechanisms or 'disciplines' would now be used as the ultimate technologies of social control by the state to produce efficient servants.

The use of practices in the Sacred Heart schools located in obedience to authority and self-control may indeed have been embedded in monastic practices which had long dominated the religious orders, but the continuance of them marks a transition into Foucault's notion of 'disciplines' in service of social control for the institution or state rather than for the individual and for God. In writings about Sacred Heart schools, these practices are linked to the monastic tradition rather than to a technology of social control. For example, in her history of the work of the Sacred Heart order, Williams suggests that the Society unites the monastic past with the women's liberation movement.¹⁵⁷ O'Leary also argues that Madeleine Sophie was the link between these two worlds.¹⁵⁸ It is not the brief of this thesis to trace the historical transition of monastic practices into mechanisms of social control but rather to locate how they were employed at Kerever Park to develop docile and self-monitoring

¹⁵⁵ Cited in Paul Rabinow (ed.), 'Introduction', *The Foucault reader*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1984, p. 21.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.* p. 181.

¹⁵⁷ Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁵⁸ O'Leary, p. xviii.

subjects who would be appropriate members of the school and ultimately of the Church.

A comparison of the 1922 Plan with the 1958 Plan reveals a growing alignment of the discourses of Sacred Heart education with the official discourses of the Roman Church. In the 1958 Plan, the papal encyclicals are quoted at the beginning of each section, with an extract from the educational writings of the order following in second place. For example, at the beginning of the section on 'the orientation and organization of work', an extract from *Divini illius Magistri*, written by Pius XI in 1929 heads the section with particular reference to the direction and supervision of the Church in educational matters: 'It is necessary that all teaching and the whole organization of the school: its teachers, syllabus and text books in every branch be regulated by the Christian spirit, under the direction and maternal supervision of the Church.'¹⁵⁹ Additionally, the reference to women 'destined to be wives and mothers', characteristic of earlier Plans including the 1922 edition, has been dropped and there is now an orientation towards youth. The older Plans were for the boarding schools only, however, this new document was intended to allow for diversity of national educational requirements in each country and to give a 'clear idea of a spirit . . . which will hold good for every work of education and teaching: in boarding school, free school, training college and university college'.¹⁶⁰ The gain in this new document was a movement away from the discourse of education as preparation for the traditional role of women towards a focus on youth. A limitation is that the document aligns the order more firmly under the control of the Roman hierarchy. Ironically, just as it was under papal directive, in the times of Madeleine Sophie, that led to the order being semi-enclosed so too would it be at the directive of the Roman Church that the order

¹⁵⁹ Society of the Sacred Heart, *Spirit and plan of studies*, 1958, p. 107.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid*, p. 7.

moved out of enclosure and dismantled the class system of sisters and mothers.¹⁶¹

Additionally, as in earlier documents which pertain to Kerever Park and Sacred Heart education, gendered behaviour is linked to ordinance from God, making, as Barthes suggests, 'contingency appear eternal',¹⁶² so too do these documents link practices of obedience and self-restraint with such ordinance. As quoted in the previous section, the three main rules of the school advised students to pray to Jesus, take Our Lady as their model in obedience, and to be helpful to others and to do what is right, with the final summary that 'you will be very happy if you follow these three rules, and Jesus and His Blessed Mother will be very happy too'.¹⁶³ In this instance, it is possible to see the link between practices of social control and ordinance from God. The embedded message is that these behaviours are what God wishes and are the way to goodness/happiness.

In the second of the three main school rules, in which the children were directed to take Our Lady as the model of obedience, the linking of obedience to authority and ordinance by God is more overt. In this instance, the children are exhorted to be polite and respectful towards those in authority and instructed that such obedience is warranted not only by the model of Mary but intrinsically by God. In this section, it is stated that the children must 'always be very respectful towards all who take God's place for you. Show, by your politeness to all Mistresses and all who look after you, that you are a child who is worthy to be called a "child of the Sacred Heart." '¹⁶⁴ The reference to 'those who take God's place for you' reproduces the religious model of the superior as God's representative who must be totally obeyed.

¹⁶¹ Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, p. 281.

¹⁶² Barthes, p. 142.

¹⁶³ Kerever Park, Rule of the school, p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*

The narratives of the religious reflect the over-riding concern on the part of those in authority, notably the mistress general of the school, that they should be able to control the children and to control themselves. Instances of the religious stepping out of line were severely reprimanded and, when they were not efficient in their control of the children, they were viewed as failures. Perfection for the children and for the religious was located in absolute obedience, with the religious being expected to extract such obedience - some could, some could not.¹⁶⁵

Foucault also saw the construction of spaces and timing within which people functioned as a way of fostering inconspicuous direction of their activities.

Disciplinary space tends to be divided into as many sections as there are bodies or elements to be distributed . . . Its aim was to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits. It was a procedure, therefore, aimed at knowing, mastering, and using.¹⁶⁶

And the children were carefully monitored in all spaces. The reconstruction of the original building from home to school with large dormitories, study room and confined play areas allowed for such monitoring. At these times, the children were under 'surveillance' as it was termed by the religious. This surveillance was explained by some of the religious as care for the children in the place of their parents,¹⁶⁷ yet these times of surveillance also afforded opportunities for the monitoring of behaviour. In the Meeting Concerning School Regulations document, following a statement which proposes that a Sacred Heart school was to maintain the 'tolerant, happy discipline of a home-like atmosphere, trustful and joyous', the rules regarding silence are spelt out: silence to be

¹⁶⁵ E.B. 9 August 1995. Interview one.

¹⁶⁶ Cited in Rouse, p. 95.

¹⁶⁷ S.B. 25 October 1995. Interview one.

insisted on - in the church, in the chapel ranks, in the dining-room ranks, before Grace and at the end of meals, in the study room, in the dormitory when rising or retiring.¹⁶⁸ The children were allowed to say a few words 'gently' on going about, but 'school corridors should have an atmosphere of quiet, so that workers and students in near-by rooms, and especially those in the Chapel, will not be disturbed'.¹⁶⁹ Ex-students remember long periods of sitting in silence with hands in their laps and a number tried hard to follow the rules and be good, while some gave up and moved into active resistance. One ex-student recounted that 'being good' to her, meant following the rules. She also reflected on how the sacrament of confession brought in the process of self-monitoring.¹⁷⁰

The monitoring of the children was systematised into a weekly occurrence called Weekly Notes. This was a common practice in Sacred Heart schools and consisted of a highly formalised ritual which took place, usually at the weekend, in which children were given a card assigning them a place in the hierarchy of acceptable behaviour. Foucault hypothesises that the combination of the ceremony of power and examination makes manifest those who are the 'observing hierarchy', who have the power to 'qualify, to classify, and to punish', and those who are subjected.¹⁷¹

Weekly Notes were the result of the 'examination' of the children's behaviour. It classified them, honouring some and punishing others. The notes were hierarchical, moving from Very Good, Good, Fair to Unsatisfactory. The criteria for the levels, based totally on obedience to school rules, were as follows:

Very Good is merited when a child is satisfactory everywhere;

¹⁶⁸ Society of the Sacred Heart, Meetings concerning school regulations, pp. 3-4.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.* p. 4.

¹⁷⁰ M.F. 5 June 1996. Interview one.

¹⁷¹ Michel Foucault, 'Discipline and punish', in Rabinow, p. 197.

Good when a child has failed in punctuality, order or some point of fidelity;

Fair for negligence amounting to disobedience, for disrespect, or for seriously failing in School regulations. This note would deprive a child of the privilege of attending Congregation.

Unsatisfactory is reserved for more serious or persistent breaches of the School Rule, for rudeness and for disobedience. Penalties would be those incurred in the past for Indifferent, and a child would cease to belong to a Congregation until she merited re-admission.¹⁷²

The assigning of these various orders would be decided at a meeting between the various religious concerned with the children and the mistress general of the school and the religious superior. At these meetings, the religious would report to those in authority the findings of their observations of the children (these observations would have been recorded in a small book each religious carried with her). There was also a system of ribbons, again a system of merit throughout all Sacred Heart schools. At Kerever Park, the younger children were given large pink bows and the older ones a pink ribbon worn as a sash. A ribbon would usually be warranted by a child receiving three Very Goods in a row. They were viewed as a process to foster behaviour based on 'duty' through the taking on of responsibility for certain charges. Initiative was referred to, but immediately limited and linked to service and God's will. It was not clear who this service was to be directed towards, but the linking of it to duty brings to consciousness the model of the helpful and dutiful woman within the family - within the temple - within the Church.

In our boarding schools, the social sense is developed in a natural way by a system of Charges and Ribbons. The children may be led to look on charges either as responsibilities for which they offer themselves freely, or as duties laid upon them, which they accept with all their implications. The latter idea approaches more nearly what awaits them in after life.

We must see that the Ribbons keep their value. They are a reward certainly, but they are above all a responsibility. Ribbons of MERIT,

¹⁷² Society of the Sacred Heart, Meetings concerning school regulations, pp. 20-21.

yes, - they are given to children who deserve this honour, but still more they are given to those who merit being promoted to a service of the highest value, shown in a true gift of self. Various committees or groups may be used for a similar purpose (games, order, signing ...) to develop the children's initiative at class or in the general life of the school. The training in initiative must not be separated from the idea of service and in the final issue this should be based on God's rights, that is to say on our dependence on His Will.¹⁷³

The formal presentation of the cards and ribbons took place usually on Sunday morning. Chairs would be set up in the front parlour, with the religious sitting in hierarchical order in front of the children. The order would then be read out class by class and the children would come forward to receive what they merited. If they received a Fair, they were required to go and stand outside the mistress general's office immediately after the ceremony. If they received Unsatisfactory, they were required to leave the meeting immediately and also to stand outside this office. The mistress general would, after some time, interview the children and a suitable punishment would be decided upon which went beyond being barred from attending Congregation, if they belonged to one. The most extreme punishment was not to be allowed out on Sunday with relatives or friend's relatives, although this was rarely used. The religious tended not to bring the Weekly Notes event into their interviews. However, one religious who did, commented that she considered it a process which aimed at making the children obedient. 'If you didn't perform you were punished and you were punished in front of everyone and it wasn't physical punishment, it was a mental and social punishment.'¹⁷⁴

While some children might achieve a regular Very Good in the Weekly Notes cycle this did not mean that they could rest assured that they had attained perfection. Membership of the religious congregation, the Congregation of the Holy Child, was aspired to by some students perhaps more out of a need to feel special than out of piety as one ex-student

¹⁷³ *ibid.* pp. 27-28.

¹⁷⁴ C.K. 18 March 1996. Interview one.

recalled.¹⁷⁵ If a student wanted to join, she was required to seek out the mistress general and ask for admittance. The normal process was for the student to be denied admission on the first request. The ex-students who recalled this experience focused more on this initial knock-back than on gaining admittance.¹⁷⁶ One ex-student, who did eventually gain admittance, was told in the first instance that she was 'flippant', a word she was told to go and look up.¹⁷⁷ A reading of this process is that the children were not to assume that they were acceptable, rather they needed to aspire to a higher degree of goodness exemplified by conformity.

Just as the children were expected to conform to the rules as closely as possible, so too were they expected to adopt such behaviour in regards to their work. A major task each year was to produce 'feast books' for the feast days of the mistress general, the reverend mother and for Parents' Day. These books were to be perfect in what they presented. No mistakes in maths, writing as perfect as possible, and with few obvious corrections. These books reveal the discourses of education in service of God, aspiring to perfection, and education in the traditional role of womanhood with its emphasis on manners (Figures 10 and 11).

Aspiring to perfection was an educational discourse in the school and it was expressed through obedience, with the ultimate goal that the child would be self-monitoring in this process. The perfect child was the one who was able to follow the rules - the one who gained merit, as demonstrated in the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting. She was one who came forward and was closest to the model of Mater Admirabilis as she pointed to the picture - closest to the model of the ideal woman, who exhibited respectfulness towards authority, was focused on others, not herself, and was obedient. Within the documents, such behaviour was linked to ordinance from God and even though the children's efforts to

¹⁷⁵ G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview one.

¹⁷⁶ D.G. 1 April 1996. Interview one and G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview two.

¹⁷⁷ G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview one

be obedient were acknowledged by the Weekly Notes, there was also a determination to keep the ultimate standard of perfection beyond the children. As one ex-student expressed it: 'Good meant I never quite made it.'¹⁷⁸

Intellectual Rigour

In her work on girls' secondary education in post-revolutionary France, Rogers argues that education for girls became more highly valued by the state as a means to a rejuvenated nation and by religious orders as a means of re-Christianising society. Both systems were based on a vision of women achieving these goals within the family, not in public life.¹⁷⁹ As a result, education was, in Rogers' terms, 'serious but non-vocational' and while 'domesticity meant different things to different people'¹⁸⁰ the goal of the Society of the Sacred Heart, established in this period, was 'to inspire in young girls social values founded on the morals of Jesus Christ, to let them know the duties they will have in the family'.¹⁸¹ The 1922 Plan of Studies of the Society reflects this 'serious but non-vocational' discourse. In the introduction to the 1922 Plan, an official letter from Mother Digby, superior general of the Society from 1895 to 1911, written to members of the Society is quoted. In this letter, Mother Digby stresses the need for Sacred Heart education to be *serious* in aspiring to develop the minds of the children and their talents in order that they may use them in service of God. As in post-revolutionary France, the use to which these talents would be put was non-vocational in that the goal was to produce women who were 'humble, intelligent and devoted helpers in the service of the Church and her works'.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Rebecca Rogers, 'Competing visions of girls' secondary education in post-revolutionary France', *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1994, pp. 147-170.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.* p. 170.

¹⁸¹ Advertisement for a Sacred Heart boarding school in the United States. Cited in Rogers, p. 167.

¹⁸² Society of the Sacred Heart, *Plan of studies*, 1922, p. vii.

Appreciation of
The Toys.

On seeing the title you might think it is a child's poem. It is about toys, but it is much



deeper than just toys.
I like this poem because I
know how the father must
have felt after he had been so
cross to his little son.
This is the outline I get from
the poem. The father had been
very cross because his little son
had disobeyed him seven times
that day. After tea he was
sent to bed without a kiss. The
father must have regretted it and
gone up to his room. He was

sleeping soundly so he gave him a kiss on his tear-stained eyes and left some of his own tears on his little son's face because on the table drawn beside him was a counter, a stone, a bottle of bluebells six or seven shells, two french copper coins, and a piece of glass—a pathetic little collection to comfort him. When the father prayed that night he realised how even grown-ups must appear as children to God when they try to find comfort in useless pleasures. God's Fatherly Heart would be no less forgiving than had been his own he thought.

The Garden in Early Spring.

One day in September Mother took us out to see how everything had changed since we went out in July. We saw that the daffodils were out. Those in the sunken garden were rather small but the others were large. The Marygolts were very sweet with their yellow petals.

After we had seen the flowers, we examined the trees and buds. The peach tree had changed since we saw it in winter. The fur covering had fallen off the buds and it was covered with pink blossom. The plum tree was in full blossom too but its green shoots were also sprouting.

The silver poplar, which is slightly bent to one side from the wind, was already in leaf.

The elm has no leaves yet but it was covered with little green buds with wings to make them fly and replant themselves further away. The oak was still quite bare. After this interesting ^{week} we thanked Mother very much for taking us.



Figure 11 : Feast Day Book. 1952

In a Circular Letter of January 13th 1898, our Venerated Mother Digby expressed it as follows: ' . . . strong studies in accordance with the spirit of our Plan; sustained effort on the part of the Mistresses and children; seriousness, which develops the mind: sure and deep principles to direct the will and keep the heart for God - these are the things we need for the education of our children, who are all too prone to take prettiness for beauty and the interesting for the true. To bring up children does not mean to amuse them, but to take possession of each faculty and of each talent in the Name of God; to guide them through the weaknesses of childhood, so that they may give back with usury, all the gifts they have received to their Creator'.¹⁸³

The religious were prepared for their contribution to this work, as primary or secondary teachers, by achieving certification through the Victorian Council of Public Education while in the novitiate. In their second year, under the direction of the novice mistress, they undertook studies in curriculum and teaching methods. They were taught the fundamentals of curriculum as well as observing demonstration lessons and teaching some lessons themselves. These lessons would be watched and criticism offered by the novice mistress. In some cases, this mistress was not primary trained. External examinations through the Victorian Education Department were also undertaken with certification, the Victorian 'C' Certificate being given after supervision of their teaching by the Victorian inspectors. Often this inspection took place at Kerever Park where those assigned to primary teaching were sent to finish their training under Lillian McGee.¹⁸⁴

The time they spent preparing for their role as teachers was limited. Part of the time in the second year of the novitiate was all that was allowed for training. Even then they were employed in the secondary school at Rose Bay during the afternoons, doing odd jobs like moving desks, supervising at recreation time and in the dormitories, generally 'pulling their weight'.¹⁸⁵ The religious were given no choice as to whether they were to

¹⁸³ *ibid.* p. v.

¹⁸⁴ S.B. 25 October 1995. Interview one.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

be primary or secondary teachers and there was a suggestion that teaching at the primary level was considered to be inferior to secondary teaching.¹⁸⁶

The educational discourse which dominated education was learning through exposition and memory. The transmission of knowledge was to 'pass from the mind of the Mistress to that of the child'.¹⁸⁷ In this transmission, the mistress must obtain from the child:

1. An intelligent response or reaction to the matter presented to her.
2. The retention in the memory of that which had been understood.
3. Some personal use of this knowledge just obtained, to be shown in such processes as comparison, judgement, reasoning, etc.¹⁸⁸

In junior classes, mistresses were directed to employ the inductive method using question and answer, to use concrete materials, to infer rules from examples and to develop the children's powers of observation by using pictures, illustrations on the blackboard, wall maps, etc.¹⁸⁹ The religious were taught to prepare for their lessons by working out detailed lesson plans which included an introduction, development and conclusion. Term plans and weekly plans had to be handed in at the beginning of the term and week respectively.

The narratives of the religious indicated that the model offered in the 1922 Plan was followed with a particular emphasis on subjects which would train the minds of the children and in this process memorisation was particularly important. After the teaching of religion, English was the

¹⁸⁶ S.B. 25 October 1995. Interview one. In this interview, the interviewee was told at the end of her training: 'You probably won't ever teach in primary because I've given you a very good recommendation. They'll probably give you what we call today Year 7.'

¹⁸⁷ Society of the Sacred Heart, *Plan of studies*, 1922, p. 13.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.* p. 15.

next most important subject. In the infants area, they concentrated on learning to read, write and spell. In the primary classes, they had grammar, especially with a concentration on parsing and analysis, and 'composition' which was largely taken up with memory work in spelling and poetry. Memorisation of the gospels was also included within these lessons, so that by the time a teacher had heard each child's memory work each day there was little time left for other work.¹⁹⁰ Writing practice was also very important.

The development of what came to be known as 'Rose Bay writing' began in England with Mother Margaret Moran who came from there in 1886. She had won a handwriting competition in England, probably before her entry into the Society, was put in charge of writing lessons in the school and for this worked out a series of models for all classes.¹⁹¹ The form of the writing is quite distinct and it is possible to identify an ex-Rose Bay student from her writing if she was successful at mastering the script. The writing card models, aside from being examples of how to form each letter, were a means of introducing the children to literature, the Bible and history as well as general knowledge.¹⁹² Examples include:

Saxon, and Norman, and Dane are us.
Virgil wrote the Aeneid: a Latin epic in twelve books.
He that loveth correction loveth Knowledge. Proverbs, Ch. XII.
He floats like a cloud of downy white.
A friend should bear a friend's infirmities. Julius Caesar.
Eagles are not found in New Zealand.
The Argonauts were Jason's companions.
We must win, not woo our crowns.¹⁹³

The children spent much time labouring over their script first in pencil

¹⁹⁰ S.B. 25 October 1995. Interview one.

¹⁹¹ Leila Barlow, Letter to Christine Trimingham Jack, unpublished material, 6 February 1996, held by Christine Trimingham Jack.

¹⁹² *ibid.*

¹⁹³ Society of the Sacred Heart, Rose Bay writing cards, unpublished material, no date, Rose Bay archives, Sydney.

in the infants and then using a pen dipped in ink. Infants children learned running writing almost from the start. The presentation of work was particularly stressed and two important outlets for this were in the weekly letters home and the feast book.

Letter writing was also important and took its place in the focus on presentation. Each week, the children wrote a letter home. In the infants' class, this letter was written on the board by Mother Patena (who was the infants mistress for the entire period in which Kerever Park operated) for the children to copy down and illustrate. In the older classes, the children wrote a letter copy in homework time which was then corrected by their class mistress, handed back to be copied out onto good paper, corrected again, and finally sent when there were no mistakes. These letters took a considerable amount of time each week and the extent to which correct grammar was emphasised is demonstrated in the following narrative extract.

MM: We had a lot of practice in letter writing because we all had to write home every week . . . There'd always be a red pen mark on our letter if we had incorrect spelling or something. I remember clearly my mother was reared by two of her aunts and uncles because her parents had died when she had been very young. We, as children, used to call the aunts and uncles' place 'up home' and our place 'down home'. I remember clearly getting a letter back one day because I had said in it to give my love to everybody 'down home' and it had come back with 'down' crossed out and 'at home'. I had to explain that that was not what I was talking about and then it was explained to me how you put something in inverted commas so I was certainly allowed to put 'down home' but it had to go in inverted commas.¹⁹⁴

Another form of presentation of work was in theatrical performances. Each year, all the children were involved in preparing a play for Parents' Day. Gilbert and Sullivan operettas were very popular, for example, HMS Pinafore and Pirates of Penzance, and took an enormous amount of rehearsal time. The music would be pre-recorded, with Lillian McGee also

¹⁹⁴ M.M. 18 April 1996. Interview one.

providing accompaniment on the piano. A stage was erected at the back of the study room in term three and the final production would take place towards the end of the year. These productions were demanding for the religious, especially with the high standards expected by Lillian McGee,¹⁹⁵ although another view was that they were a unifying force within the school.¹⁹⁶

The children did mathematics which consisted of basic algorithms, memorisation of tables, and mental and written problems. In geography, they learnt the main countries of the world and their capitals, as well as about climate and the formation of river systems. In history, they learnt largely English history with an emphasis on the monarchy. Science took the form of nature study, the objective of which was to come to view creation as 'the work of God'.¹⁹⁷ The curriculum guidelines for science in the junior classes occupies less than a page in the 1922 Plan of Studies and is almost entirely devoted to a quotation from Janet Erskine Stuart. In the early years, there was no access to state curriculum documents and very few teaching resources, although by the late 1950s the curriculum documents were available. The 1922 Plan was intended to provide curriculum guidelines. This section of the document suggests that a walk in the garden, admiring the trees and plants, would suffice for science in the infants' and primary years.

'The love of Nature awakened early is a great estate with which to endow a child,' wrote our Venerated Mother Stuart, in *The Education of Catholic Girls*. 'The object of this informal Nature-study,' she continued, 'is to put children directly in touch with the beautiful and wonderful things within their reach. Its lesson-book is everywhere, its time is every time, its spirit is wonder and delight . . . Its range is not restricted within the formal limits; it is neither Botany, nor Natural History nor Physics; neither instruction on light, nor heat nor sound, but it wanders on a voyage of discovery into all these domains.'¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ E.R. 2 September 1995. Interview two.

¹⁹⁶ C.K. 18 March 1996. Interview one.

¹⁹⁷ Society of the Sacred Heart, *Plan of studies*, 1922, p. 95.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.* p. 96.

One ex-student remembered being taken for many walks around the property and gardens, perhaps in service of nature study classes, and discussions they had with the religious about the link between nature and God - that nature might help one spiritually but that it did not take the place of God. She also considered that they were 'sheltered' from the 'big, hard subjects' like Physics and Chemistry.¹⁹⁹ Her narrative reflects a curriculum which was oriented to producing refined middle class Catholic women - an education which was, in Rogers' terms, 'serious but non-vocational'. This student also recalled being taught art history with a focus on Church architecture and paintings, but the other interviewees commented that there was a lack of opportunity for art and music. The children were taught almost exclusively by the nuns, except for physical education, dancing and music teachers who came in once a week. However, within their normal classes, the children were encouraged to decorate their work and, in some instances, were encouraged to paint as well as being taught basket weaving and puppet making.

The religious were not encouraged to develop their talents in the area of art and music. This was considered to be part of the vow of poverty and arose out of the discourse of love expressed through sacrifice and suffering - giving up all one's talents for God. One religious reported that in the noviceship years she undertook the art classes given to the senior school students at Rose Bay as part of her preparation for teaching. When she did a very creative piece of embroidery, the mistress of novices 'was askance', and told the young woman she didn't think much of her sewing, with a final pronouncement that she didn't 'have the hands' for embroidery.²⁰⁰ Given this background, it would have been surprising if the religious had been confident in teaching art creatively.

¹⁹⁹ M.M. 18 April 1996. Interview one. This discussion probably was about trying to distinguish God from nature, so that the children did not fall into 'Pantheism' - believing that everything, including nature, was God - which was then considered by the Church to be a heresy.

²⁰⁰ S.B. 3 November 1995. Interview two.

Sewing was considered to be an important skill and a prize for darning was given each year. One ex-student recalled the ability of the infants mistress to motivate the children but that often this skill was devoted to subjects like darning.

GD: So every class she [Mother Patena] would get you to the brink and preparation for learning went on so long. She promised us we would all learn to darn. She glued hessian to brown paper. And she showed us the brown paper. 'See this. This is going to be the backing.' We had a month of looking at the backing. Then she would show us the hessian. 'See this. I am going to glue this to the backing.' And we would spend a month waiting. If you want to teach anyone something, first, tell them how good it is, take three years preparing them and no wonder I learnt to darn. I was so good at darning. I won the prize for darning and I could darn the socks for the entire school as a reward. I bloody darned socks at Kerever Park. It's unbelievable. The only prize I got was the prize for darning. She taught us how to darn and she was absolutely methodical. It was an art form. She could have taught anyone anything, I think, except she didn't. ²⁰¹

Physical education was considered to be unseemly for religious women. This was, however, not in keeping with what was happening in other parts of the world. One religious, who, before she came to Kerever Park, had taken some training in a national Catholic teacher training college in New Zealand, run by the Sacred Heart order, reported that there nuns were being trained to teach all the subjects.²⁰² A male lay teacher was brought in each week to teach the children physical education, a separate woman from the local area taught piano to those who required it and ballet was taught to the whole school by two teachers referred to as the 'Misses Kaye'. At the end of each week, there was a test on Friday morning which covered much of the work undertaken during the school week and included dictation and maths.

The religious all agreed that they used a lot of memorisation in their teaching and that the teaching methods employed often encouraged the

²⁰¹ G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview one.

²⁰² S.B. 25 October 1995. Interview one.

children to learn without understanding. One religious, who enjoyed the teaching, also made attempts to reach out beyond the boundaries of the school. She remembered working on a book by Ruth Park and then encouraging the children to write to the author, who in turn, responded to the children's letters. She also tried to make the teaching of ancient history come alive by getting the children to act out various historical scenes. In her narrative, she reflected on the beauty of the environment, and the uncomplicated nature of these young children who were 'unquestioning' and 'receptive'. Yet she soon moved beyond this reflection to admit that the children were taught by rote, were not encouraged to question and that they were expected to be totally obedient. In this section of her narrative, she seemed to slip from a discourse of Kerever Park as a haven for the children where they were free, safe and innocent into admitting that a discourse of social control, which arose out of the way in which the religious community operated, was what really happened on a day to day basis in the school.²⁰³

The majority of ex-students interviewed found most of the lessons, with the strong emphasis on memorisation, extremely tedious and boring but, in spite of the limitations of the curriculum and the emphasis on memory, some teachers were able to motivate some of the children, including the following ex-student.

MM: History was something that I've got a great love of, certainly of modern history . . . Certainly there was that dreadful thing of having to know the name and date of all the queens and kings of England. I know that was pretty dreadful but that seemed to be important, I suppose in all junior schools in those days. Also battles. It was taught in an exciting sort of way. In quite detailed information about battles and characters in those battles. Largely English history. I don't know that we learnt any ancient history at Kerever Park. I don't have any recollection of that.

CTJ: What about geography? You mentioned that.

²⁰³ C.K. 18 March 1996. Interview one.

MM: That was something that was important. I remember quite clearly if you could quote any country to us we could tell you its capital. That was very important. It's surprising to find how that sits by you till today and I often think when you speak about the Argentine or Argentina, which is it? People pronounce it differently but we would always have said: Argentina Buenos Aries! We learnt about zones and rain forests and things that a child found interesting. Probably now when I think about it there would have been a lot of thought given to making the classes interesting because they certainly were.²⁰⁴

As in most schools, it seems that there was a wide diversity in ability to teach. Some teachers were able to motivate the children in spite of the rigidity of the curriculum, yet any educational discourse which diverged from the traditional one of those in authority was strongly resisted by Lillian McGee. The ideas of progressivism, a child centred discourse in which the learner is actively involved, took no foothold. One religious who wanted to work from this orientation remarked on the lack of teaching resources as well as on the rigidity of the traditional approach based almost purely on exposition.

SB: Well, you would perhaps give a topic for a story and get ideas from the children and put words on the board and they would write a story from that. Maths was either working from a text book or putting work on the board to do in their exercise books. But no practical actual measurement, or weighing, or things like that whereas the other method [the progressive model] had water and scales and rulers and all sorts of ways for the children to find things out for themselves.²⁰⁵

One ex-student, who was a bright child, who loved reading and who found the education lacking in any challenge for her, commented how different it was when an American nun encouraged her to read and used her reading as the basis for class work, rather than taking away the books as a punishment.

JH: But the only teacher there who was any good for me, who I respected . . . was American and not like the other nuns at all. I

²⁰⁴ M.M. 18 April 1996. Interview one.

²⁰⁵ M.D. 25 September 1995. Interview two.

think she was a trained teacher before she entered the nunnery . . . she was the only person in my whole school life who really did any teaching as far as I'm concerned in that she knew I liked books. They took them away at every chance they could, that was a good punishment or I wasn't reading at the right time. She encouraged me to read and she got me to write a book review on Jane Eyre and L . . . D . . . was doing the same thing and she got better marks than I did and it was the only time in my whole school life that I had imagined ... it was a surprise to me and it was very good. I really needed to be having a lot more of that exercise because until this day I am not a very analytical sort of person. I didn't develop the skill of literary criticism. So it was very appropriate. She was a very good teacher that person.²⁰⁶

Another ex-student commented that the teaching/learning experience was an exercise in conformity which allowed no place for the children to express or develop their own ideas.²⁰⁷

There is little doubt that those in authority, as well as those who actually taught the children, aspired to provide the children with a rigorous education. Yet the constriction of the enclosed life of the religious based on a hierarchical model precluded the inclusion and development of new discourses about education. The limited nature of teacher training, both in pre-service years and in ongoing in-service, the lack of teaching resources and curriculum guidelines, as well as the focus on education in service of God, led to a restricted curriculum. Finally, the location of educational outcomes in the view that these girls were destined to be wives and mothers led to a gendered curriculum.

Conclusion

In a document published in 1994, to mark the fifty year celebration of the opening of Kerever Park,²⁰⁸ one ex-student wrote the following words about her experience there.

²⁰⁶ J.H. 1 June 1996. Interview one.

²⁰⁷ G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview one.

²⁰⁸ As noted previously, the school is now a retreat centre and retirement home for elderly members of the order.

It's only in looking back after experiencing life that I truly appreciated the moulding haven that was Kerever Park. Where in our present world could young girls be absorbed in such a way by revered women dedicated to turning out the gracious, disciplined, educated lady?²⁰⁹

Central to this text is a metaphoric reference. The term 'moulding haven' is a 'split reference' and takes on a metaphoric characteristic.²¹⁰ The notion of the school as 'haven' persists, but when it is placed beside 'moulding', the idea of the school solely as a refuge breaks down. The combining of the two words suggests a tension between the two ways of describing it and the school cannot be thought of entirely as 'refuge' or entirely as 'an instrument of shaping'. The two words rub up against each other, giving witness to what the experience was like and yet not like.

This metaphor of the school as 'moulding haven' reflects a tension between the discourses of aspiration. The original motivation to establish Kerever Park seems to have been located in a desire to provide young children with an educational setting which was more homely than institutional, as well as in a desire to develop a separate preparatory school for Rose Bay Convent. In keeping with the euphoric hopes of the post-war period, early writings about the school located it in the post-war fiction of freedom, safety and happiness. At Kerever Park, children would be innocent, safe and close to God - the school as 'antechamber of heaven' - a haven. The purchase of a large country home reflected this aspiration and, in the early years of the school, including the time spent in temporary accommodation before purchase of the permanent foundation, there was some realisation of this aspiration. However, the long-standing educational discourses of the Society sat in tension with this discourse of school as home, and the period of consolidation, reflected in the changing

²⁰⁹ Carolyn Lyons (McAlary), *Kerever Park: past pupils remember....*, flier put out to celebrate fifty years, 1994, Rose Bay archives, Sydney.

²¹⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *The rule of metaphor: multidisciplinary studies of the creation of meaning and language*, translated by Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin & John Costello, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978 (1975), p. 21.

architecture, resulted in this discourse soon becoming more facade than reality.

As Symes suggests, the school vestibule 'is where the school enshrines important aspects of its culture, where it conducts various strategies of impression management, and establishes the symbolic climate of the school'.²¹¹ Not only the vestibule but the whole exterior of the public side of Kerever Park presented as a country home, almost hidden down a small side street, surrounded by peaceful gardens where a child might live a life of freedom and security. Yet closer examination of other discourses of aspiration and the discourses of the experiences of the religious and ex-students reveals that the desire to mould the children was the overarching theme in the pedagogic practices of the school.

The school was not about replicating what may have been the relatively free life of the children's homes. Rather, the family that the children were being prepared for was the family of the Church. In this family, the religious took the role of the mothers, who brought their children up strong in the faith and well prepared for their future roles as wives and mothers. In this family, the father, the male dominated Church, was absent but ultimately all powerful. Membership of this family was based on obedience, docility and unquestioning acceptance of all that was taught, as it was in the general Catholic population. In the school setting, merit was given to those who followed the rules.

Those in authority at the school considered it important that the children had a sound basic education, but emphasis was placed on learning the tenets of religion and preparation for a life of responsibility and duty rather than on critical thinking, creativity and independence. The children were being prepared for their 'God ordained' roles as wives and mothers and the education they required for these two roles needed to be serious. They were to be able to read and write efficiently, to be well

²¹¹ Symes, p. 2.

versed in literature, mathematics, history, geography, and in the accomplishments of middle class women who understood the social graces, but above all in matters of religious beliefs and faith. But it was to be non-vocational in that it did not aspire to prepare them for life beyond the roles of wives and mothers in the context of the Church.

The model of womanhood given to the children was based on Our Lady as represented in the Mater Admirabilis icon. They were to be prayerful, respectful, gentle, kind, devoted and silent. As with the religious, the Mater Admirabilis icon acted as a model which, it was hoped, would inform the consciousness of the children. Perhaps the price of the 'secure haven' was the 'absorbing of young girls' into conventionally gendered beings. But as the narratives of the ex-students reveal in the next chapter, opposition and resistance - as expressed in the suppressed side of the icon - also operated in their experience.

CHAPTER FOUR

LIVING IN THE KING'S GARDEN: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS

Seven religious participated in interviews for this research. Both within the interviews and in later analysis of the transcripts developed from the interviews, it is possible to gain insight into the active process of the construction of memory and particularly the struggle of the individual to find meaning in their experiences. This struggle occurred in relation to two time frames - the past and the present.

Borland argues that, within narrative, performance occurs on two levels. First, there is the 'dynamic interaction between the thinking subject and the narrated event (her own life experience)' and, second, 'between the thinking subject and the narrative event (her "assumption of responsibility to an audience")'.¹ Within the interviews, it is possible to see Borland's notion of the performance on two levels, as the religious sought to gain understanding of their past experiences, while at the same time providing an understanding which would be acceptable to various audiences, in particular members of the Society and past students. At times, offering explanations which simultaneously aligned the religious with both of these groups proved difficult.

All the religious interviewed maintained an identification with the Society even though one has since left. However, they all admitted that the experience of being at the school had been difficult, although for some these difficulties were more cogent than for others. Apart from the one coadjutrix sister interviewed, all had been young religious when they came to the school. Some were straight out of the novitiate and all

¹ Katherine Borland, ' "That's not what I said": interpretative conflict in oral narrative research', in Sherna Berger Gluck & Daphne Patai (eds), *Women's words: the feminist practice of oral history*, New York, Routledge, 1991, p. 63.

wanted to be accepted as part of the community, and that acceptance entailed being able to meet the expectations of those in positions of authority. Some accepted the hegemonic practices of the school with little questioning. They, as Hollway suggests, invested in the dominant discourses of the school and gained a sense of agency from such identification.² In turn, they were rewarded for this alignment. As Weedon argues, the choice of one discourse over another is not separate from politics and power. Rather choice is influenced by 'the political strength of the interests which they represent'.³ However, not all entered into full identification. Some held discourses which conflicted with the ideology from which these practices arose. Significantly, these conflicting discourses tended to align them with the students rather than with those in authority. For these individuals, gaining a sense of agency was more difficult, especially as they attempted to negotiate the difficult process of both identifying with the Society while at the same time resisting some of its discourses. In a number of the interviews, this difficult process continued in the present.

In the struggle to find meaning with which the person could be comfortable, the religious turned to the discourses located in Catholicism and in the social memory of the Society. All spoke of the beauty of the garden and of difficulties associated with the demands placed upon them in regards to the work they generally undertook within the house. In speaking about the garden, they tended to turn to the discourse of the mysterious and ineffable love of God. When they spoke about the time they spent engaged in duties associated with their work, they explored Catholic discourses associated with the school ideology, including those of love expressed as sacrifice and suffering, and obedience and conformity to those in authority. In doing so, they positioned themselves variously in relation to those discourses.

² Wendy Hollway, 'Gender difference and the production of subjectivity', in Julian Henriques, Wendy Hollway, Cathy Urwin, Couze Venn & Valerie Walkerdine (eds), *Changing the subject: psychology, social regulation and subjectivity*, London, Methuen, 1984, p. 238.

³ *ibid.* p. 26.

In trying to find a meaning which would encompass both the difficulties they experienced as well as the great pleasure they took from the beauty of the garden setting, many turned, in some way, to the bible story of the Garden of Eden and an associated discourse in which life is seen as being both full of beauty and full of limitations. However, just as the discourse of obedience and conformity to those in authority may be located in writings about the Sacred Heart, as discussed in chapter two, so too is this discourse embedded in the Garden of Eden story.

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed out of the ground. The Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil . . . And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'⁴

In all the interviews, there were some experiences which tended to hold an intensity for the individual in that they came readily to mind, were associated with strong emotions, and tended to dominate the memory of the individual. Crawford et al. argue that there is a direct relationship between what we remember and the active search for meaning⁵, that is, that the memories which remain with us tend to be those which arose in situations in which the search for intelligibility was difficult due to unfamiliarity, conflict or contradiction, and the lack of resolution.⁶ The experiences which tended to dominate the interviews and to hold the most intensity were those in which there was some discrepancy between the discourses held by the individual and the discourses held by those in positions of power.

⁴ Genesis 2: 8-10 and 16-17. *The Holy Bible, new revised standard version*, Iowa, World Bible Publishers, 1989, p. 2.

⁵ June Crawford, Susan Kippax, Jenny Obyx, Una Gault & Pam Benton, *Emotion and gender: constructing meaning from memory*, London, Sage, 1992, p. 9.

⁶ *ibid.* p. 38.

Middleton and Edwards argue that people's memories need to be 'examined as contextualized and variable productions that do pragmatic and rhetorical work' and that no one version can be taken as a person's real memory.⁷ In their argument, original experience is not objective, rather it is an example of 'two discourses at different points in time, each doing constructive work on what everyone is doing, seeing and thinking'.⁸ Similarly, Shotter argues that what we take to be the nature of the world is grounded in 'what the facts of the world will permit or allow us to say'.⁹ Within the narratives, it is possible to locate not only the discourses which the person drew upon in the present to assign meaning to the experience, but also the discourses they drew upon in the period when they were at the school. As such, the interviews provide insight into the social order of the school, the discourses which shaped the ideology of that order, and how each person sought to position herself in relation to those discourses.

Examination of the narratives also broke down any notions of separating out aspects which specifically relate to education. As recent historians such as Theobald have pointed out, just as it is no 'longer possible to embark upon an unproblematic search for the real woman', so is it no longer possible to embark upon an unproblematic search for the real teacher.¹⁰ Mackinnon notes that, while the narratives of teachers allow us to see the extent to which 'narratives are shaped according to dominant discourses', the individual responses reveal a range of diverse strategies adopted in relation to those discourses - 'strategies of

7 David Middleton & Derek Edwards, 'Conversational remembering: a social psychological approach', in David Middleton & Derek Edwards (eds), *Collective remembering*, London, Sage, 1990, p. 37.

8 *ibid.* p. 43.

9 John Shotter, 'The social construction of remembering and forgetting', in Middleton & Edwards, p. 125.

10 Marjorie R. Theobald, 'Writing the lives of women teachers: problems and possibilities', in Lyn Yates (ed.), *Feminism and education*, Melbourne Studies in Education, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1993, p. 39.

accommodation, of resistance or of active shaping'.¹¹ In examining the narratives of the religious, both the individuality of each experience and the complex interaction of various aspects of their lives cannot be ignored. This complex interaction may be considered horizontally, as we see how various discourses and the person's position within the power relations of the social order of the school and wider society impact on the meaning they ascribe to the educational experience. They may also be considered vertically in considering, as Gadamer suggests, how that meaning stands in relationship to the whole of the person's life.¹²

In this chapter, I explore through a case study approach the narratives of four of the religious interviewed in order to identify this personal search for meaning and agency. In the last section of the chapter, I will locate the narratives of the three other religious interviewed in relation to the discussion covered in the four case studies. There is a need for oral historians to avoid naive appropriation of superficial meanings offered within the narratives. As Ricoeur's hermeneutic suggests, we must approach any text with a degree of suspicion, avoiding 'easy assimilation to past meanings'.¹³ In the following discussion, I will attempt to adopt a 'hermeneutic of suspicion'¹⁴ by identifying discourses embedded within the narratives. I also draw upon the work of Chanfrault-Duchet who argues that the most crucial information gathered from narrators lies within the narrative organisation itself.¹⁵ Chanfrault-Duchet argues that by focusing interpretation on the structure of the narrative, by identifying key phrases used, underlying patterns of behaviour which deal with the

11 Alison Mackinnon, 'Collective biography: reading early university women from their own texts', in Susan Magarey (ed.), *Writing lives: feminist biography and autobiography*, Adelaide, Australian Feminist Studies Publication, 1992, p. 102.

12 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and method: multi-disciplinary studies in the creation of meaning*, 2nd ed., translated by William Geln-Doepel, London, Sheed & Ward, 1978 (1975), p. 60.

13 Erin White, 'Between suspicion and hope: Paul Ricoeur's vital hermeneutic', *Journal of Literature and Theology*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1991, p. 312.

14 *ibid.*

15 Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet, 'Narrative structures, social models, and symbolic representation in the life story', in Gluck & Patai, p. 77.

reproduction or transgression of the hegemonic social model, and the employment of various narrative models which convey the individual's vision of history, it is possible to locate the socio-symbolic contents these structures bring into play.¹⁶

I employ theory as a way in to identifying the meaning which each person has constructed about the experience of Kerever Park. The meanings available are always limited by the social order in which the person is placed and what they choose or resist reflects that social order. The choice of meanings both locates the person in relation to the social order and is also indicative of choices made previously and in earlier relationships established within other contexts. There is no neat, disconnected way of viewing experience; it is interdependent and networked with experience which came before and after, and also with both how the social order is constituted and, in turn, constitutes the individual. It is also connected to the future, in that any examination of the past and how that past is constructed is inextricably linked to constructions of subjectivity for the future. As Melucci writes: 'Whenever we confront the possible - as in planning for the future - when we make a decision that anticipates the action to come, the past is re-examined, amended, and given a new meaning.'¹⁷ In my use of the work of these theorists, I value the insight into meaning it offers and I hope that these conclusions provide a step towards further appropriation of meaning, while acknowledging as Ricoeur's hermeneutic suggests, that full appropriation is 'not here', 'not yet'.¹⁸ Finally, while employing certain theories as a way of providing a richer reading of the narratives, I along with historians like Theobald place the emphasis in this reading on the side of narrative rather than theory.¹⁹ The outcome of this choice is that the story of each individual

¹⁶ *ibid.* pp. 77-82.

¹⁷ Alberto Melucci, *The playing self: person and meaning in the planetary society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 12.

¹⁸ White, p. 312.

¹⁹ Theobald, p. 40.

remains paramount, with theory acting as a guide at various points along the way. As Gadamer points out, what we call experience 'means something unforgettable and irreplaceable that is inexhaustible in terms of the understanding and determination of its meaning'.²⁰ Stories of people's lives have a staying power which outlives any theory.

Bluebells, Grenades, and Living in the King's Garden

Mary and Suzanne both came to Kerever Park when they were in their early twenties and for both these women it was their first teaching appointment. Mary was appointed there in 1946, the year of the publication of the first *Cor Unum* article about Kerever Park that was referred to in the previous chapter and in which the school was depicted as the ideal haven for happy childhood. Suzanne came in 1955. Within their narratives, both these religious located themselves as outsiders, a position which seems at first to arise from the fact that they were bearers of educational discourses which differed from those which directed common educational practice at the school. Yet examination of the life story of each of them gives rise to an explanation of this positioning of outsider which may be linked to experiences beyond the immediate school setting. Additionally, within both narratives, it is possible to locate examples of how they took on the meanings of the social order of the school, examples of how they resisted them and examples of how they sought to find meanings with which they could feel satisfied. In communicating their current interpretation of this experience, both religious drew on a discourse of Catholicism which is embedded in the bible story of the Garden of Eden: that life in God's world contains both beauty and limitation. Within the narratives, employment of this story brings into play the discourses of the mysterious and ineffable love of God, and obedience and conformity to those in authority.

²⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and method: multi-disciplinary studies in the creation of meaning*, 2nd ed., translated by William Geln-Doepel, London, Sheed & Ward, 1978 (1975), p. 60.

Suzanne's Story

As discussed earlier, it was common practice for young nuns, 'aspirants' as they were called, to come to the school in their first year out of the juniorate (the year of teacher training undertaken after the initial year of novitiate) in order to receive further training from the mistress general of Kerever Park, Lillian McGee. However, in contrast with usual practice, Suzanne had already spent two years at Loreto Hall, the National Catholic Training College in Auckland where she received further training in primary teaching.²¹ As the College had just been opened by the Society, it was felt by those in authority in the Society that it would be appropriate to send someone from Australia and hence Suzanne's placement there. While at Loreto Hall, Suzanne was exposed to progressive educational discourses which focused on a child centred approach in which the children are actively involved in learning. This approach was quite different from the traditional educational discourses, outlined in the previous chapter, which were employed at Kerever Park and which fostered an approach based largely on exposition and memorisation.

All the interviews with those at Kerever Park were structured by one opening question: 'We are here to talk about being a religious at Kerever Park; so how would you like to start in telling me about that experience?' Suzanne responded to this question by first spending a lengthy amount of time talking about going to Loreto Hall. There, she reported, they were given 'the good old style of doing some books' and at the same time given a holistic approach to education including physical education, craft and the latest on children's literature which left her with 'a great enthusiasm for communicating this to the children and . . . interested in the all round scene'.²² As a result of this experience, her view of children

²¹ Loreto Hall was founded in New Zealand in 1950 and run by the Sacred Heart Society but as a national Catholic training college under the auspices of the local bishops. See Margaret Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart: history of a spirit, 1800-1975*, London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978, p. 245.

²² S.B. 25 October 1995. Interview one.

became located in a Rousseauian view of them as curious, active learners who learn best through discovering knowledge. When Suzanne came back to Australia, she was sent to Kerever Park which she'd 'always heard that that was paradise on earth so I thought how pleasant to be sent straight away down there'.²³ What she found was that although the setting was 'absolutely beautiful . . . the children lacked freedom and were mostly confined to their teaching areas and that famous study room'.²⁴

She came to the school 'full of new ideas' but found that she couldn't 'spread . . . [her] wings'.²⁵ In New Zealand, she had been trained to take her class for the whole day, teaching all subjects including art and physical education. At Kerever Park, she was given Year 6 and told that she would teach English. However, even this subject would be divided up with Lillian McGee teaching the children grammar while Suzanne taught composition. While English was her favourite subject, and Suzanne was pleased not to have to teach grammar, the difficulty she soon encountered was that by the time she did all the required memory work in spelling, as well as a passage from the gospels and some poetry there was little time left for the creative teaching of composition. What was also frustrating was that there were few teaching resources and the available children's literature was outdated in comparison with what she had been exposed to in New Zealand. The outcome was that Suzanne felt frustrated because she believed that she wasn't 'teaching as . . . [she] should'.²⁶

Yet Suzanne held on to her views. She requested permission to use them and was initially denied. Eventually, she was given permission to try out what she considered to be 'the latest methods on Natural Science' and have the outcomes included in the special feast books which were

23 *ibid.*

24 *ibid.*

25 *ibid.*

26 *ibid.*

prepared by the children to present to the mistress general on her feast day. Suzanne structured the lessons by providing the children with a list of activities which would allow them to 'discover' some of the attributes of the big pine trees which lined the drive up to the school. The children's reports were included in the feast books but the outcome was not a happy one, as Suzanne reported.

SB: In my mind it was a good thing because it was individual and it was creative. I never heard what Mother McGee really thought about them, because when she finally gave back the set of books after the feast they all had little notes in them illustrating the spelling errors that I'd missed!²⁷

What is interesting about this quotation is the belief which Suzanne had in her own ideas. So convinced was she of them that she acted upon this belief by asking if she could put her ideas into practice - thereby subtly challenging current practice. In another section of the narrative, she spoke about the excitement these new educational ideas engendered in her and how she believed they were in keeping with the values of the Society.

SB: I was full of new ideas and so when it came to Mother McGee's feast I said I would like to put into practice these latest methods on Natural Science, so in other words nature study. And I thought what better place in the world than Kerever Park for nature study? Now the method that we had been given was, this 'eureka' business, I know only because I had found out . . . they were bringing in that approach that you set things up but you didn't pour it in, you helped the child to find out. In other words, you didn't teach Johnny Latin you taught Latin to Johnny. The child was the important one. Well, that's always been important in our type of education, 'child centred', of great interest in every individual child so I could respond to that.²⁸

These sections of Suzanne's narrative reveal the tenacity with which she held onto her ideas even when they were not well received. What seems

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *ibid.*

to have given her agency was her belief in the harmony between the progressive ideas she had been exposed to in New Zealand and the underlying values of the Society which placed emphasis on the individual child. In subtly challenging the established ideas by persisting in trying out her own, Suzanne positioned herself both within the discourse of progress and as one who is the bearer of it. As Chanfrault-Duchet expresses it, the one on a 'quest for authentic values'.²⁹ Yet in spite of fighting for her right to try out her ideas, and her persistence in believing in them even when she received no recognition, Suzanne seems to have concurrently identified with the established discourses. She was at Kerever Park as a young religious, who had just joined the Society. She wanted to be accepted as a member of that community and hence there was a need for her ultimately to accept the social order of the Society. Yet her alignment with educational discourses which varied from those employed at the school placed her at odds with those in power at the school.

In one section of her narrative, she recalled an incident in which some children picked up a dead snake on their way to the field for recreation. Instead of walking in the required sedate manner, they threw it around, teasing her that it was still alive, with Suzanne being unable to stop them. She continued: 'I couldn't stop them but I feel they should have been free to run down to the meadow and have their games instead of all that extra discipline. It was like keeping them . . .'.³⁰ Suzanne didn't finish her sentence but a reading of it might be that the children were kept 'under the thumb'. She too 'as a young person', often experienced 'not the freedom of the country but a kind of strong dominance' over her.³¹ She questioned the strict discipline, although not openly as she was 'scared of going outside the limits'.³² She was, as she expressed it, so 'full of making

²⁹ Chanfrault-Duchet, pp. 80-81.

²⁹ S.B. 25 October 1995. Interview one.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

... [her] own life'³³ within the community that it is not surprising that she, in part, aligned herself with the dominant discourses. She remembered being in 'admiration' of those who could control the children, who 'just had to appear' and there would be order.³⁴ By the end of her time at Kerever Park, as indicated in the following extract, she revealed how she both resisted the dominant discourse of conformity and obedience to those in authority and yet at the same time conformed to it, at least in her desires.

SB: I didn't feel that I was a success but I put that down to me. To me the great thing was being able to have control of the children and I learnt some years down the track that control doesn't mean that they are all sitting there like little zombies, listening to every word that you say. Control is when you can just check them by calling their name and saying, stop that talking or something. I got it later when I had big classes.³⁵

The way in which Suzanne both desired the ability to control the children, as prescribed at the school, and at the same time resisted this practice, reflects the work of Crawford et al. These researchers found, in their memory work with women, that at times women acquiesce, 'to take on the social definition of the event or of our actions. On the other hand we resist. Sometimes we actively question, argue, reflect, explore, defy and create our own meanings against the social definitions.'³⁶ Suzanne both acquiesced and resisted in her struggle to make sense of her experience. She blamed herself for lacking what was required to control the children and yet she resisted full appropriation of the meaning of control adopted by those in authority. Ultimately, after her time at Kerever Park, as indicated in the previous extract, she found a discourse of control which was more in keeping with her own educational ideas.

In thinking about how others thought of her, Suzanne to some degree

33 *ibid.*

34 *ibid.*

35 *ibid.*

36 Crawford et al., p. 10.

took on the position of outsider. She reflected that she was considered to be 'a kind of enigma as . . . [she] had come from another country and from this high-faluting Loreto Hall and so . . . [she] was outside the general pattern'.³⁷ She also described herself as 'a little newcomer'.³⁸ Indeed, Suzanne was outside the general pattern of those who completed their training in the novitiate and then were immediately sent to Kerever Park for final training. At first glance, this experience provides an explanation of this view of herself. Yet other sections of her narrative suggest that there was a further explanation for this location. Suzanne was the only one of the religious interviewed who did not attend a Sacred Heart school and, as already discussed, it was common for young women to join the order in which they were educated.³⁹ She had considered joining other orders and had been proactive in her decision and had 'interviewed' those she was considering including the Sacred Heart order.⁴⁰ This was in contrast to the others interviewed who either simply selected the order where they were educated because they found it familiar or comfortable, or because they were directed there by a priest even though they were interested in moving further afield.⁴¹ Suzanne also reported that in the novitiate they 'weren't exactly put in a mould and everybody turned out just . . . to be the same. Although you had to conform to what was there but just the same you remained an individual.'⁴² Yet she also recalled a closedness there, with the other young religious constantly talking almost exclusively about events within the Society. None of the other religious reported a discourse of individuality from their time in the novitiate. In contrast, the discourse of being 'an individual' was strong throughout Suzanne's narrative. She also spoke extensively about the limited

³⁷ S.B. 25 October 1995. Interview one.

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ See also Sophie McGrath, 'Women religious in the history of Australia 1888-1950: a case study - the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 81, part 2, 1995, p.197. McGrath refers to a pattern of ex-students being a source of religious vocations for the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta.

⁴⁰ S.B. 3 November 1995. Interview two.

⁴¹ P.R. 3 October 1995. Interview one and C.K. 18 March 1996. Interview one.

⁴² S.B. 3 November 1995. Interview two.

intellectual conversation within the community at Kerever Park and the fact that the Australian Province of the Society generally remained 'faithful' to what they thought was 'still going on' in other parts of the world, even though the others had moved on to embrace new ideas.⁴³ In these reflections, she both identified with the order and yet at the same time she remained separate. By drawing on a discourse of progress, she offered critique to various aspects of the Society in Australia.

This positioning of herself as both part of the community and also outside it is reflected in a section of her narrative in which she discussed the books she found interesting while at the school. She commented that she was very struck, at the time, by the life of Elizabeth of Hungary. I asked her what struck her about the story and her response was as follows.

SB: I was always very interested in history and I just thought she was such a beautiful person to be just crushed by the formality of the Hungarian court. She had a sympathy, she even learned the Magyar language because of the Hungarians who so hated being in the Austrian empire and yet she was condemned for that. She wasn't Austrian enough and the way she had children - the boy was taken to be reared as an emperor and this little girl, Valerie, she used to take when she was on holidays by ferry across the lake to get very special confectionery in Switzerland, things like that.⁴⁴

After this response, I took the risk of reflecting back to her that her description of Elizabeth's life reminded me of what she had been talking about - her experience of being full of new ways of teaching and the lack of support and encouragement she received for her enthusiasm - although I did not overtly express my interpretation. In response to my suggestion, she introduced the word 'repression', a word she had introduced earlier in regards to her own feelings about the school. Yet even though she again introduced it herself, she struggled to find some redeeming features of the school.

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ S.B. 25 October 1995. Interview one.

SB: It could, looking for the freedom, yes. I wouldn't like it to be said that this was a very repressive system because up here [at Rose Bay] the nuns thought they were so unrepressed. I mean there the countryside was so open but our lifestyle was constricted. Yes, I think it could have changed too, we were just on the very edge of change in the middle of the fifties and the real changes came in the sixties. There was a lot of emphasis on piety but I didn't see it as a sickly piety. They had devotions, they used to sing that hymn, Little King: 'Little King so fair and sweet, see us gathered at thy feet.' There was a tradition in our junior schools to have junior school practices and characteristics. I found them all exemplified there at Kerever Park.⁴⁵

In her utilisation of this story of Elizabeth of Hungary, Suzanne could be viewed as identifying with Elizabeth, 'who was so beautiful' (full of new and creative ways of teaching), 'had learnt the language of the people' (a child centred focus which she saw as being reflective of the values of the Society) and was 'crushed by the formality of the court' (not able to make her voice heard within the established system). Eventually, Suzanne called upon a discourse of Catholicism, embedded in a bible story, as a way of providing meaning for the tension between her own experience of repression and her desire to identify with the community and to view the school positively.

Towards the end of the first interview, Suzanne took up the theme of repression again but at that stage she drew on the story of the Garden of Eden, through her reference to the King's garden.

SB: So you see we were enclosed and some of the effect of that enclosed nature of living, it has its beauties, like 'all the beauty of the King's garden is within', but it also has its limitations because for all the strict discipline and if you like to call it repression, was in our Rule. Our children were always spirited and that wasn't only because repression always made them break out. There is a certain *savoir faire*, a confidence there that maybe they needed it. I don't think all children were suited to our régime. By and large they were happy enough, it seems to me, but they did have their crying fits which were not to do with getting into trouble. They didn't get into too much trouble. There wasn't enough opportunity, you see, but some were miserable.⁴⁶

45 *ibid.*

46 *ibid.*

In spite of the difficulties Suzanne encountered at Kerever Park, she remembered that she was also 'conscious of the great sense of beauty there, so that the whole ambience of the place was one to lift up the soul'.⁴⁷ In Suzanne's employment of the King's Garden story, the school becomes the Garden of Eden which is beautiful but which has limitations that must be obeyed. Here, the discourses of mysterious and ineffable love, and of conformity and obedience to those in authority come into play. Within the garden, she was able to experience the mysterious and ineffable love of God as it lifted 'up her soul'. Yet within the order of the school, she was required to conform to the demands of those in positions of authority. In her reference to these limitations being within the Rule of the order, she distanced herself from them and placed them beyond question, yet there was still an ambivalence here. The tension she expressed between acceptance and rejection of the system affirms what Crawford et al. argue, that women both participate in and resist their own subjugation.

Mary's Story

Mary was twenty-four when she took up her first teaching appointment as part of the teaching community for two years at Kerever Park. At the beginning of her interview, she set the scene for a tension, which was maintained throughout the narrative, between, on the one hand, her enjoyment of the beauty of the environment and her commitment to her own view of relating to children and, on the other, her resistance to the strict discipline towards the children.

MD: I loved the whole of the country atmosphere. It was just a beautiful place . . . yes, it was a very homely atmosphere, but at times the discipline was a bit strict and since I have done further study in education, especially psychology, realise that parts of the discipline of the children wasn't very wise.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ M.D. 7 September 1995. Interview one.

As with Suzanne, Mary was also the bearer of a discourse about teaching which differed from those of authority figures. She sought to develop 'a more friendly relationship with them than the mother superior kind of relationship' and to 'always praise what they had done'.⁴⁹ She believed that the emphasis in the school was on conformity and a desire to 'curb' the children, to bring them 'into line' or they might be 'disruptive of the group'.⁵⁰ In contrast, she believed in a friendly relationship with children based on mutual respect and praising the children's efforts. In one incident, where she recalled a teacher scolding a child publicly, Mary reported feeling 'great sympathy for the child' and 'indignation' towards the teacher. 'Even though,' she continued, 'I was infinitely younger than she was, I still had an instinct about children'.⁵¹

Unlike Suzanne, Mary's 'instinct' for children came from her father rather than from teacher training. Out of her two parents, Mary's father had been 'the understanding one', while her mother was 'the disciplinarian'.⁵² She and her father were 'great friends' and would go for walks together through the fields. 'He loved nature and so did I,' she reported, 'we had a lot in common and he used to talk to me about his childhood days and things like that and so I felt real friendship and equality with him'.⁵³ How he treated her was how she wanted to treat the children 'almost instinctively'.⁵⁴

While Mary held onto her own beliefs about how children should be treated, as did Suzanne, she did not challenge the beliefs of those in authority. In reporting why she did not challenge them, she drew on a belief that she was powerless in that setting. Like Suzanne, who explained

49 *ibid.*

50 M.D. 25 September 1995. Interview two.

51 M.D. 7 September 1995. Interview one.

52 M.D. 25 September 1995. Interview two.

53 *ibid.*

54 *ibid.*

the approach to discipline as being in the Rule of the Society and therefore reifying it to a position beyond change, Mary also looked back and accepted that that was the way it was in those days and it could not be changed. In finding understanding in this way, she also drew upon the discourse of progress.

MD: Well, I suppose I had to go along with it because in those days in religious life you were very submissive. I was twenty-four and so I just would have gone along with it because I felt I couldn't do anything else but inside, always in my relationship with the children, I had a different attitude and emphasised that in my relationship with them.⁵⁵

The reason for Mary's ostensible lack of agency, in comparison to Suzanne who did persist in gaining permission for trying out her ideas, may lie in the fact that Suzanne received her alternative educational discourses from a national training college which was governed by the Society. In contrast, Mary received hers from her father, which carried weight with her personally, but which may have carried little weight in the public forum. Mary's reference to her 'instinctive' response to the children also suggests that her actions may not have arisen from a full awareness of the source of her discourses. Later, after she left Kerever Park, Mary went to study in London at the Froebel College. There, she learnt about 'the person's self-regarding sentiment as they called it,' the self-image, 'which it is so important to build up in the child, in anyone'.⁵⁶ There she found articulated the discourses she had 'instinctively' believed in for so long. Ultimately, she was also vindicated by Lillian McGee, the mistress general of the school.

Mary recounted, at the end of the first interview (after the tape recorder had been turned off and just as I was about to leave), an interaction between herself and the former mistress general. This interaction took place well after the school had closed. In this interchange, Lillian McGee

⁵⁵ M.D. 7 September 1995. Interview one.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

admitted to Mary that what she was doing for the children was 'far better for the children' and that Lillian's own 'approach was wrong'.⁵⁷ Mary considered that what she was doing with the children was 'freer', developing a more friendly relationship with them, building up their self-confidence and not always finding fault with them. As a result of this affirmation from Lillian, the two women had a close and warm relationship after that until Lillian died in 1982.⁵⁸ At the beginning of her narrative, Mary had immediately placed herself as the bearer of a different educational discourse which she considered to be more in keeping with the nature of young children than the discourse of obedience and conformity to those in authority adopted by the school. At the end, she told a story which affirmed her personal agency.

However, while Mary was later vindicated, it was only when she left Kerever Park that she began to openly challenge the traditional educational practices of the Society. In one such instance, she recalled watching a young child who was then boarding at Rose Bay after Kerever Park had closed, 'go to her mother as if she were a stranger'. Mary told the mother she would be far better to take the child home and send her to the local school. She concluded: 'She was just cut off from her family and not at ease with her mother. So that always stuck in my mind.'⁵⁹ While still at Kerever Park, she privately sought to establish the sort of relationship with the children she thought was appropriate and to respond to them as spontaneous, rather than in need of curbing. She chatted and played with them in the dormitory, even though she knew this was frowned upon. When the weather was good, she often took them outside for some of their lessons. In recollecting one of these experiences, she recalled that, while she and the class were sitting on the verandah, a child went inside to sharpen her pencil and came out screaming because baby kittens had

57 *ibid.*

58 *ibid.*

59 *ibid.*

been born in the rubbish bin.⁶⁰ This incident most probably drew the attention of those in authority and it was one of a number of events in which Mary reported taking an initiative and was either reprimanded for it or was in fear of being reprimanded. For example, one incident involved her allowing a child to keep her special white dress on during the siesta on her first communion day. When those in authority found out, Mary was reprimanded. In her recollection of this event, she revealed that, while she maintained her own position about the appropriateness of her actions, she did not defend herself at the time by offering her reasoning in the matter. Perhaps she realised that her reasoning would not be valued.

MD: I was told. You should never have done it. Make her take it off. She'll be fidgeting for the rest of the day in Benediction, or something. But the way I looked at it - but I didn't give this as my reason - it was her day and she wanted to keep it on.⁶¹

In another section of the narrative, Mary recalled taking the children outside to have their poetry lesson under a tree and also allowing them to sit on the verandah when it was very hot. She concluded these recollections by stating: 'That was alright. No one complained.'⁶² While it seemed that her initiatives did pass unnoticed in some instances, the threat of being reprimanded by authority lay heavily upon her. Her way of being a teacher to young children in that setting was to 'deal with the situation as it occurs'.⁶³ For example, once a child had vomited in the bed during the night. In the morning, she was 'in an awful mess' and Mary's immediate response was to run a bath and wash the child. However, another religious complained that she should have asked permission to bathe the child and Mary was again reprimanded.⁶⁴ This pattern of taking an initiative in responding to the needs of the children and being

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ M.D. 25 September 1995. Interview two.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

rebuked also extended to actions on her own behalf. She reported that the time when the building additions were being completed was interesting and she 'peeked in to see how the workmen were going'. Obviously those in authority found out about her actions and she was told that it was not her 'job to find out if they [the workmen] were getting on'.⁶⁵

Crawford et al. define fear as being located in the anticipation of an assault on self or significant others.⁶⁶ While Mary did not specifically refer to this feeling, it seems that it may have been associated with aspects of her experience. This pattern of responding spontaneously to what was around her and either being reprimanded or being in fear of being reprimanded suggests an interpretation of a story which was referred to in both interviews with Mary.

Mary's parents originally came from a small country town in England. They emigrated to Australia when Mary was an infant. Her mother had often told her about how in spring the field opposite their cottage would be covered with bluebells. After leaving Kerever Park, Mary went to London to study at the Froebel College. One day, while on an excursion with other students, the group stopped and had lunch in a field of bluebells. Mary reported 'how lovely it was to see it' but, while she was sitting in the field, she scratched in the ground to bury a piece of chocolate paper and discovered an unexploded grenade. She concluded the story by stating: 'I had to tell the bus driver, they were reporting any unexploded grenades.'⁶⁷

At first glance, this story appears to have no direct bearing on Mary's experience of Kerever Park. It is only when consideration is given to the narrative as a whole, as Chanfrault-Duchet suggests, that it takes on meaning. In the experiences Mary shared from her time at the school,

⁶⁵ M.D. 7 September 1995. Interview one.

⁶⁶ Crawford et al., p. 117.

⁶⁷ M.D. 7 September 1995. Interview one.

there was a pattern of her responding spontaneously, taking initiatives and then being reprimanded for this behaviour. Her spontaneity sat in tension with a need to obey those in authority (the discourse of obedience and conformity to those in authority) thereby avoiding any direct and unpleasant confrontation: 'I had to tell the bus driver, they were reporting any unexploded grenades.'

Mary's narrative also brought into play the discourse of the mysterious and ineffable love of God. Like Suzanne, Mary loved the garden at Kerever Park and referred often to walking in it both by herself and with a French nun while they spoke French in preparation for Mary's visit to Rome to take her final vows. There she experienced God through nature: '[I] just felt his closeness in all that beauty.'⁶⁸ The garden at Kerever Park, full of flowering bulbs, perhaps even bluebells, was designed and planted in the English tradition. Mary's reference to an English field of bluebells containing an unexploded grenade could be viewed as reflecting her experience of Kerever Park: a place in which she found richness and beauty in her experiences of the garden and in her interactions with the children and some responsive others (a field of bluebells), but also a place in which she was reprimanded, or feared such a response, if she used her initiative or responded spontaneously (unexploded grenades). In this depiction of her experience at the school, she joined with Suzanne in using meanings embedded within the Garden of Eden story to provide an understanding of the experience with which she can now feel comfortable. As with Suzanne, the experience had both richness but also limitation but, in contrast with Suzanne, the limitations were often unexpected. Mary's way was to respond to situations spontaneously. She assessed the needs of the situation rather than what 'should' be done, and for this she received, or was afraid of receiving, rebuke from those in authority. At the end of the first interview when I asked Mary what words she would use to describe her experience of Kerever Park, she

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

responded: 'Happy but constricted, which marred the happiness a bit.'⁶⁹

While the above explanation offers meaning as to why Mary would raise the story of the bluebells and the grenade within an interview about Kerever Park, other meanings may be attached to the story. As discussed, Mary and her parents were originally from England. Her mother's story of the field of bluebells is a story of home and Mary identified that going back to England was important to her for this reason - it was where she felt at home. However, she continued this reflection by referring to reading Edmund Campion's book, *Rockchoppers*, which offered her an explanation as to why she 'felt not belonging so much here in Australia'.⁷⁰ He points out, she recalled, the fact that Australian Catholics have an Irish background and the English a Protestant background and on reading this 'it dawned' on her for the first time that she was in neither group - she was an 'English Catholic'.⁷¹ Mary continued this discussion by speaking about the fact that in her father's family they had kept the Catholic faith right through the Reformation, 'they had a priest's hide-hole in the walls of the home and so the D..... side have never lost the faith'.⁷² The outcome of this reflection, in Mary's interpretation, was that this explained why she has often, over her life-time, felt herself to be an 'outsider'. Perhaps it was also this construction of what it meant to be a member of her family, this construction of subjectivity - the ones who keep the faith - which provided her with a meaning which allowed her to maintain her alternative educational discourse within a social order which emphasised conformity and obedience.

Mary was at the school in 1946 and 1947. Her narrative, as does Suzanne's, challenges the official view contained in the articles published in *Cor Unum* and incorporated in historical writings referred to in the

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ M.D. 25 September 1995. Interview two.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² *ibid.*

previous chapter, which cast the school as an ideal setting for happy childhood. Mary concluded that the children were 'too cut off from real life . . . a kind of precious little segregated situation and that was no good'.⁷³ While the educational discourses they both subscribed to differed from those which were officially implemented within the school and while both acquiesced in many situations to what was asked of them, both held onto their individual understandings of education. These meanings were not worked out in isolation from the rest of their lives, rather they reflect the ongoing struggle for meaning which, as Gadamer and Chanfrault-Duchet suggest, is linked to the whole of life experience.

It is also possible to identify, as Crawford et al. argue, ways in which the women both cooperated in and also resisted the process of subordination.⁷⁴ At times, Suzanne and Mary accepted the dominant discourse of conformity and obedience to those in authority and at times they resisted by taking a course of action in private which was at odds with established practice. Both, for different reasons, held onto their individual discourses. Mary perhaps because she had learnt from her family background to be a 'keeper of the faith' and Suzanne because she believed that her discourse was more in keeping with the values of the Society than those which underlay the educational practice of the school. In the case of Suzanne, it is possible to see how she subtly but overtly challenged the dominant social order. Their individual stories of 'Elizabeth of Hungary' and 'bluebells and grenades' convey an experience of repression, yet they both employed a similar discourse to communicate their understanding of the experience and to wrestle personal meaning with which they can now be happy. This discourse is contained in the story of the Garden of Eden - full of riches but also having limitations/difficulties - and this serves to rescue the experience and explain it in a way which is in keeping with the symbolic order in which they live - as members of a religious order within the Catholic church.

⁷³ M.D. 7 September 1995. Interview one.

⁷⁴ Crawford et al. p. 10.

A Golden Period: Before and After

It was also the first teaching appointment for Catherine and Dianne when they came to Kerever Park. Both had attended Sacred Heart schools in their secondary years but Dianne had begun her education as a seven year old at Kerever Park. While these two women shared the same background of secondary education, their experience of Kerever Park was very different from each other and different from that of Suzanne and Mary. While Catherine referred to her time there as a golden period when everything was integrated and happy, for Dianne Kerever Park was transformed from being a place of suffering into a place of happiness and openness only after it ceased to be a school. For her, being there as a child and as a religious were both periods of great difficulty which she endured.

Catherine's Story

Catherine came to Kerever Park in 1959 and spent three years there as a young religious. In the beginning of her narrative, she summarised the overall form of her narrative.

CK: I look back on it as years in my twenties when I was just raw from the novitiate and a first year in training as a primary teacher at that time and was sent to Kerever Park as twenty-two or twenty-three, not terribly much older than the students who were there. Ten years isn't very much at that time. It was a very happy period in my life in many ways. Physically, it was uncomfortable. Terribly cold, as I recall, in winter. And the dormitories were freezing. I can just recall being unable to get to sleep at night because I was so cold. The days were very cold when we had to stand in windy conditions in recreation times. But overall it was a very picturesque place to be and it was a very happy period, except for the last year, my mother died and they were the days when people really were not allowed to show affection or understanding really in many ways. It was a very difficult time for me. I left Kerever Park the year after. I was taken back to Rose Bay.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ C.K. 18 March 1996. Interview one. All quotes and information relating to Catherine in the following section are taken from this interview.

This extract sets up a number of themes which ran throughout Catherine's narrative: her youth and need for guidance, the physical experience of coldness, the beauty of the surroundings, the time as a contained, happy period, and the pain that came from issues associated with her mother.

When Catherine came to Kerever Park, she soon formed a strong bond with the mistress general, Lillian McGee. She found Lillian to be 'a fine primary teacher' who instructed her in many 'useful' aspects of teaching. For example, as a young student herself, Catherine had found grammar very difficult. Lillian helped her by making her take the role of a student and working her through the exercises the children would have to do. Catherine reported that this experience made grammar 'as clear as day' to her and she still loves teaching it. Lillian McGee also had, as Catherine noted, 'a great sense of . . . the spiritual in her life' and she shared this sense with Catherine. Lillian became her spiritual director and what Catherine gained from her was 'a love of the gospels' which provided her with a way in to discovering the core of religious life - the person of Christ. Lillian became Catherine's role model.

CK: To me she was a very kindly and good person and that was a reflection of her own interior life . . . From a lifetime of prayer, that was the result in her. A person of great goodness and great joy, really. She had a lot of happiness in her and it's always struck me that if that's the result of a religious life lived the way she lived it, then it does good to people.

Later in the interview, Catherine described herself as 'like a sponge' soaking up whatever she could get from Lillian. One outcome was that Catherine found, under Lillian's direction, her own prayer life nourishing.

However, not all aspects of her prayer were satisfying for Catherine. She remembered finding the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, sung three times a day in choir, unsatisfying.

CK: The thing I always found very difficult was the Office. It was one part of prayer which I really disliked because it was the same office every day. I think it was the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary and it was the same office every day and it was sung in Latin. For me, it was a useless hymn of praise, it wasn't something that touched anything within me at all.

When I asked Catherine if she thought this at the time, she responded that she didn't really begin to question it until later. Rather than actively resisting this practice while at Kerever Park, she was able to avoid it, and to justify such avoidance to herself, when duties associated with the children required her to be elsewhere.

'Radical' obedience, she stated, was at the core of their lives. Whatever you were asked to do, 'you did it unquestioning . . . when the bell rings or you are called from what you are doing, you will leave a letter even half formed'. In Catherine's mind, superficially there appeared to be no movement towards questioning what she was asked to do. She described herself as 'starry eyed', and that she wanted to give all. Yet while, in Chanfrault-Duchet's words, there was 'melding with the values of the community',⁷⁶ Catherine, like Suzanne and Mary, also resisted. For example, a young student she had known from Rose Bay came to visit her one day. At that period, the religious were allowed only one hour of parlour time - time with visitors. Catherine stayed with her visitor well beyond the hour, as the student had some personal problems she wished to talk over with her. The outcome was that Catherine was severely reprimanded by Lillian McGee. While she accepted why Lillian reprimanded her - she had after all broken the rules - Catherine also reported that, in her mind, Lillian didn't understand the situation. In this incident, Catherine determined her own meaning for the situation, acted upon it and although reprimanded she retained her sense of agency.

Catherine described herself as a rebellious child and it seems that she

⁷⁶ Chanfrault-Duchet, p. 81.

made up for this in her time at Kerever Park. In her narrative, she constructed herself in the role of student who enjoyed learning for the first time many of the things she prepared for the children. For example, she had never studied Greek or Roman history but she learnt about the Peloponnesian Wars, being 'just a page ahead of the students if [she] was lucky'. Then she brought the classes alive by taking the children outside to 're-live' these wars. By the time Catherine came to Kerever Park in 1959, the NSW curriculum documents were readily available within the school, so she worked from them in developing a term and weekly plan. As Suzanne had noted, there were few library resources, but Catherine found the monthly children's magazine, which came out from the Department of Education, very helpful. In one period, a story by Ruth Park about a little boy lost in the bush was serialised over nine issues. Catherine encouraged the children to write to the author and Ruth Park responded, which they all found exciting. She also used the story thematically in her teaching. As the central story was about getting lost in the bush, she taught the class about compass points and the movement of the earth and sun. She stated that she taught largely by exposition, although she also used some group work. She recalled Lillian McGee asking her why there were 'quite frequent gales of laughter' which came from her classroom, then 'suddenly stopped'. Her response was that her lessons were 'fun' but 'controlled'. Yet when I asked Catherine if this was a reprimand, she replied that she had no sense of that. This experience stands in strong contrast with the experiences of Mary and Suzanne. A likely explanation is that Catherine was one of those people Suzanne envied - those who were able to control the children in a manner which was acceptable to those in authority. As obedience and conformity to authority was a major discourse within the school, it seems that both Catherine's desire and ability to conform to the expectations of her superiors met with approval and affirmation. Additionally, she reported that she liked the highly structured nature of the lessons they were required to give. Catherine's readiness to be so open to what Lillian McGee offered her must have provided Lillian with her own sense of

affirmation and recognition, in contrast with Suzanne and Mary who were the bearers of challenging educational discourses.

Catherine reported that over those years she had no ongoing sense of stress except when she was asked to play the piano for the dancing class - an experience she found 'horrifying'. The initiatives she felt free to take, such as having classes outside the confines of the classroom and writing to Ruth Park, seemed to have contributed to her sense of agency. Even within the prescriptions of the accepted educational practices, she was able to negotiate her own way of teaching. Crawford et al. argue that the emotion of happiness is constructed in the 'intersection of freedom and autonomy, on the one hand, and recognition which is grounded in security, on the other'.⁷⁷ Catherine found the experience of Kerever Park generally a happy one and it is possible to locate this emotion in her sense of receiving recognition and a degree of autonomy from those in authority, especially Lillian McGee.

Yet in spite of these positive experiences, there were also difficulties for Catherine. As already discussed, she found the cold very hard to bear as she did the lack of privacy which came from living in the dormitories with the children. However, the most difficult issue was the fact that her mother had not been able to come to terms with Catherine joining the order. She described these years as being a period of 'being at loggerheads with the very person, the mother, who is all the world to you'. Even though Lillian McGee tried to remedy the situation by inviting Catherine's mother to stay at the convent, there was no ultimate reconciliation when her mother died in the last year that Catherine was at the school.

Towards the end of the interview, Catherine spoke about reading *Jane*

⁷⁷ Crawford et al., p. 90.

Eyre for the first time and loving it. She reflected that it was like her own story at the time:

CK: Much of it, I suppose, looking back, mirrored, in that terrible orphanage that Jane Eyre found herself in. I suppose some of the discomfort of Kerever Park was mirrored in that orphanage. You felt for her [Jane Eyre], her vicissitudes and difficulties, maybe it mirrored a little bit of my own kind of life, gradually coming to an understanding of yourself, as she did, finding it difficult to teach this child and being both repelled and attracted by this unusual man. The whole fantasy of this wife locked away upstairs in this castle/building and her pseudo marriage to him followed by the revelation of what was really going on. The final irony, the *dénouement*, her marriage itself.

As stated in the goals of the Society, 'the Divine Heart [of Jesus] is the centre and model' of religious life.⁷⁸ For Catherine, living out that goal involved finding the person of Christ through her prayer life which she seemed to have achieved in spite of the 'vicissitudes and difficulties' that life at Kerever Park presented. Perhaps she too felt both 'repelled and attracted by this unusual man'. Catherine applied herself to her teaching, as did Jane Eyre, and attained a sense of agency in that experience yet in the background was the ongoing difficulty with her mother (the woman locked upstairs). During that period, Catherine believed she was profoundly sure of her religious vocation and happy in it, never questioning it in any way. She reported that she just 'accepted . . . the way that religious life was run'. However, the stability of this position was challenged by her memory of pushing down, 'in the interests of being obedient and accepting what the superior said', any feelings of rebellion. It was in the 1960s 'when', in Catherine's words, 'the whole world started to crack and fall apart' and the happening of Vatican Two which 'split . . . open' the certainty of centuries that her own certainty ended.

Carolyn Heilbrun argues that it is possible for a woman to 'write her own life in advance of living it, unconsciously, and without recognizing or

⁷⁸ Society of the Sacred Heart, *The Constitutions and rules of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, Roehampton, 1928, closed document, Rose Bay archives, Sydney, pp. 5-7.

naming the process'.⁷⁹ Catherine's reference to the story of Jane Eyre, with its various elements including the final *dénouement*, as mirroring her own life, reflects some of what Heilbrun is arguing - that we construct the nature of our future lives as well as our present lives. Similarly, Haug writes 'that catastrophe is prepared well in advance, and is itself the result of a general training in the normality of heteronomy'.⁸⁰ In the normality of convent life in the pre-Vatican Two years, questioning, as Catherine demonstrated in her narrative, was not permitted. Conformity and obedience to the thoughts and wishes of those in authority was the dominant discourse. Yet there were underground rumblings within Catherine's own psyche which may have, as Haug suggests, prepared a crisis well in advance. She reported pushing 'down those rising feelings of rebellion in the interests of being obedient and accepting what the superior says'. There were rewards for this suppression in that she received approval and was given a degree of freedom from the mistress general.

Catherine referred to her time at Kerever Park as 'like a little golden period' in which she achieved 'formation' of herself 'as a person'. 'It was', she continued, 'a lovely period, difficult, yet it was a whole period . . . a little golden period of understanding myself more'. At Kerever Park, Catherine developed her spirituality and her capacity for teaching, feeling certain of her vocation. Jane Eyre achieved her golden period of certainty in the period prior to her discovery of Rochester's mad wife. After the events of this pivotal point, Jane Eyre must accept the messiness of life and a degree of incompleteness with a blind husband. Catherine referred to the 1960s as being 'when the whole world was starting to crack and fall apart and there were rumblings underground everywhere'. This was the period of Vatican Two in which the certainties of centuries were laid open to question and when, in Catherine's words, 'everything was split

⁷⁹ Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Writing a woman's life*, London, The Women's Press, 1989, p. 11.

⁸⁰ Frigga Haug (ed.), *Female sexualization: a collective work of memory*, translated by Erica Carter, London, Verso, 1987 (1983), p. 87.

open, totally split open'.

In Catherine's narrative, she variously portrayed her period at Kerever Park as a golden period in which there was certainty and as a place in which the hegemonic practices, in hindsight, were questionable. For example, she referred to this period as a 'protected and very precious time' and where the children were 'uncomplicated . . . unquestioning, receptive'. She constructed the children as she constructed herself, as a young person who was unquestioning and keen to learn. Yet in retrospect, she also noted that as a young religious she was not given information about the children's families, so that if there were problems which may have led to difficult behaviours in the children, she had no insight into those difficulties. She also admitted to her own tendency to discount the physical needs of the children when they were sick with illnesses like asthma and chilblains. If what Haug suggests is true, perhaps Catherine's 'splitting open' in the 1960s, the final *dénouement* in her narrative, was already under way with the rebellious feelings, and the mad woman locked away was her own uncertainty, her rebellion, pushed down.⁸¹ Eventually, in the years after she left Kerever Park, Catherine was to reach the point at which she said 'no one could help [her] spiritually'. It was at this point that she left the order.

Dianne's Story

Dianne's experience of Kerever Park was almost totally the opposite of Catherine's. Whereas Catherine experienced success in her teaching and a nourishing relationship with the mistress general, Dianne experienced a sense of failure in her teaching and a lack of helpful support. However, for Dianne, her time at Kerever Park as a young religious just out of the novitiate was not her first experience there. She began her education at Kerever Park as a seven year old child. This early experience was

⁸¹ See Heilbrun, p. 15. Heilbrun writes that, in regards to forbidden anger, women who could find 'no voice in which to publicly complain . . . took refuge in depression or madness'.

extremely painful, as was her adult experience at the school.

Dianne was from the country, the youngest of five children and, as there was no access to a local primary or secondary school, all children were sent away at a very young age. Her brothers left at five, while Dianne and her sister, 'presumably being of the gentler sex,' as she expressed it, 'left only at the age of seven'.⁸² Since all her siblings had gone to boarding school, as a child she considered it automatic that she would too. That expectation did not lessen the wrench she experienced on separation, even though her older sister was also at the school. Dianne would sometimes go the whole term without seeing her parents and at least once stayed on over the Easter holidays as there was not sufficient time to go home. She remembered the envy she felt of girls who lived nearby and who saw their parents on a weekly basis. Dianne's experience of the cold, the pain of separation, the message that her crying was unacceptable behaviour and the strictness of the enclosed school life all combined to make these early years traumatic, a state in which, she said, she lived her young life. In her narrative, she referred to 'steeling herself' as a way of coping. The embedded discourse here was one of being strong.

Her secondary education was completed at Rose Bay. She then had a year at home, coming back at the end of that year to join the order. Her attraction to the order was the 'commitment to the person of Jesus and with an emphasis on love'. Dianne reported that while in the novitiate the life of Madeleine Sophie and the writings of Erskine Stuart became inspirational for her. In particular, she identified with Madeleine Sophie who came from a country background and was thrust into a 'foreign' situation when she was made superior of the order at a young age and against her wishes, just as Dianne had been thrust into a foreign situation as a young child at Kerever Park. In the constructions of Madeleine Sophie's life, Dianne seems to have found understanding for her own

⁸² D.G. 1 April 1996. Interview one. All further narrative extracts in this section come from this interview.

experience of suffering which gave her a point of identification with someone within the order and allowed her to accept her suffering as having meaning.

When Dianne returned to Kerever Park, straight out of the novitiate, it remained a place of struggle and difficulty for her. She identified with the homesick children and felt compassion for them but was not allowed to reach out to them as she would have liked. Teaching had not been a career she sought and she experienced struggle and failure there. She found her relationship with Lillian McGee difficult and some of the superiors non-supportive. Again, as she had as a child, she experienced loneliness, especially for her family, although she found some respite at Christmas time when Lillian McGee allowed her a special extension of 'parlour time' with her mother. Her one aim, she recalled, was a desire to be allowed to accompany the children on the train to Sydney but this was denied her. She remained confined to Kerever Park for two and a half years.

A statement she made about being confined to the school as a religious reflects the structure of Dianne's narrative: the intense sense of loneliness and her general identification with the social order.

DG: The hardest thing for me was being confined to Kerever Park for two and half years because, in fact, I didn't even leave the property except to go to the dentist. I didn't ever go down to Rose Bay on the train with the children or to pick up the children. I'm sure that might have been a test of my faith or something but that's how it was. So I think the hardest thing was being confined there and the loneliness . . . and loneliness.

This extract also reveals that, just as she had constructed a discourse of being strong by 'steeling herself' as a child, as an adult she developed a similar discourse, viewing her experience as a test of faith - being strong. Her love for God required her to endure sacrifice and suffering. Dianne commented that, as well as finding writings about the life of Madeleine

Sophie inspirational, she was also inspired by the writings of Erskine Stuart, and especially the images she conveyed through her poetic style. 'She just had a capacity to touch me - some deep part of me that was very important.' When I asked Dianne what it was in particular that inspired her in Erskine Stuart's writings, she was unable to recall.

In her writings about the life of a religious of the Sacred Heart, Erskine Stuart drew heavily on the discourse of love expressed through sacrifice and suffering. For example, in one such writing she constructs the life of Philippine Duchesne, who took the order to America, as following the passion of Christ. In this extract, Erskine Stuart begins with an inspirational quotation from the Collect said by the religious during daily office, which placed the life of Christ at the pinnacle of inspiration. She then moved into the process of seeking to find the mind of Christ so as to imitate his behaviour. This culminates in a crucifixion scene in which Duchesne suffers 'hard and disappointing labours' in her missionary work. In this case, the loss of hope takes the form of a death.⁸³ Erskine Stuart argues that the theme of Madeleine Sophie's teaching was 'the gift of love for love, with the added depth and devotedness which comes of understanding that a soul may make reparation and give real consolation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the coldness and ingratitude' which he met on earth.⁸⁴ These writings of Erskine Stuart, with references such as 'the gift of love for love', are poetic and inspirational and perhaps it was such writings which provided Dianne with meaning for her experience of failure and gave rise to her discourse of this time as a test of faith. The discourse of suffering as a test of faith is embedded in a dualistic world view in which, as Zappone suggests, humanity is seen as created 'essentially separate from God' and in which God becomes 'the beneficent ruler, requiring humanity to deny its natural will and act according to the

⁸³ Janet Erskine Stuart, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, Roehampton, Convent of the Sacred Heart, 1923, pp. 58-59.

⁸⁴ *ibid.* p. 54.

"will of the Father".⁸⁵ Acting in the place of God, as was considered to be the role of the superior of the religious, Lillian McGee was beneficent in allowing Dianne extra parlour time but demanding in denying her permission to leave the convent and accompany the children in the train to Sydney. In Dianne's case, she must prove her faith in and love for God by enduring her hardships, steeling herself as an adult as she did as a child.

Within her narrative, Dianne generally spoke in the first person singular except on a few occasions. These instances are reflective of situations in which she did take or might have taken some initiative. Her use of the words 'one' and 'you', rather than saying 'I', may be interpreted as expressing a sense of distance from an experience in which she felt powerless. In one instance as a child, she requested to be allowed to enter the Congregation of the Holy Child. 'One asked to be received into the congregation and one was accepted or one was refused for reasons relating to one's behaviour or one's attitude and then one could try again in about a month.'⁸⁶ Although she was eventually admitted, it seemed that she was rejected in this first approach on the basis of 'her attitude'. Another example of this distancing was when she was directed in the novitiate to undertake primary teaching: 'One was guided.'⁸⁷ In the rest of her statements, Dianne used the first person, speaking either for herself as 'I' or as 'we'. Chanfrault-Duchet refers to key phrases, such as 'We were obliged to' and 'I did not want to', as expressing the 'harmony, the indifference, the ambiguity, the conflict, and so on, existing between the self and society'.⁸⁸ The 'we' in Dianne's narrative seems to reflect a pattern of identification with the social order. There was no evidence of

⁸⁵ Katherine Zappone, *The hope for wholeness: a spirituality for feminists*, Mystic (Connecticut), Twenty Third Publications, 1991, p. 24.

⁸⁶ Another narrative by an ex-student evidenced that this was normal practice, that is, that a student would seek admission to a congregation, be denied on the basis of some personal failing, and then be given admission later. See G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview one.

⁸⁷ Another religious confirmed that they were directed into either primary or secondary teaching rather than choosing it. See E.B. 9 August 1995. Interview one.

⁸⁸ Chanfrault-Duchet, p. 79.

her actively questioning in her time as a religious at the school. When I asked her if she tried to change things in any way, she referred to 'acceptance in a spirit of faith' indicating that she accepted that God's will was expressed through that of her superiors.

In constructing meaning in her experience of Kerever Park as an adult, meaning with which she could now feel resolved and which was acceptable to a wider audience, Dianne placed herself as an actor in the course of history. This actor had little power or desire to make it different, 'that was how we lived'. In doing so, she adopted what Chanfrault-Duchet refers to as a narrative model in which she 'melds with the community, which, in its values is [was] beyond change'.⁸⁹

DG: I think we were trained to accept things in the spirit of faith. It was formation of spirituality but it was the formation of one's human life because that was how we lived, humanly in the spirit of faith. The whole of understanding of obedience was linked with faith so one accepted what one was told, in the spirit of faith and in the spirit of obedience.

However, her view of the social order was that it was imposed on the religious - leaving an underlying inference that they were powerless to change it. 'I think they [referring to two religious in particular] adopted strictness that perhaps was not natural to them. One in particular.' Dianne drew on a number of factors to explain how this imposition came about.

DG: I think a definite culture grew up there, the more strongly because from 1942 at the Rift until 1965 Mother McGee was principal and Mother Patena was there as the infants teacher. Other people came and went but they were very strong influences and I think a culture built which was influenced also by the enclosure and the insularity of the place because of separation from parents.

⁸⁹ *ibid.* p. 81.

Dianne's view of the insularity of the school was also supported by other religious.⁹⁰ However, what these religious fail to address is that it was the social order of the Society in particular, and the Church in general, which supported this ideology of conformity and control.

Yet although Dianne identified with the social order, it is also possible to locate within her narrative, as Crawford et al. suggest, places in which she resisted it. For example, she referred to feeling 'the burden of expectations from the senior established religious who were there' and finding these 'difficult to live up to'. As indicated in other narratives, it was not acceptable for the religious to show the children physical affection.⁹¹ However, Dianne reported that at times, when she felt 'comfortable within' herself (perhaps indicating a sense of agency), she was able to align herself with the children and offer them comfort, especially those who were homesick. She referred to this as taking 'a more human approach . . . just perhaps tucking them into bed, I'm not sure if tucking them into bed was the done thing but I do remember trying to give them a little bit of comfort when they were particularly homesick'. Here she both defied the expectations of those in authority while at the same time she accepted the discourse of obedience by saying that the expectations 'were hard to live up to'.

Obedying her superiors became a test of her faith and the children obeying her became a matter of survival. She acknowledged that she did not feel as positively towards difficult children as she did towards the homesick children. She was 'struggling for . . . [her] own survival', knowing that if a class 'got out of hand and if a particular situation got out of hand', then she would 'be held accountable for that'. Just as it is possible to assign fear to Mary's experience of being reprimanded for her behaviour, similarly it is possible to assign a similar feeling to Dianne's experience - if she could not control the children, there would be unpleasant consequences.

⁹⁰ See M.D. 7 September 1995. Interview one and S.B. 25 October 1995. Interview one.

⁹¹ See S.B. 25 October 1995. Interview one.

A place of short relief for Dianne was provided in the garden, especially during the annual eight day retreat conducted during school holidays when she was allowed to do things not normally allowed. In her experience of the garden, she picked up a theme expressed by other religious, one of the garden being a source of 'nourishment'. In her reflections on the garden, she also expressed a discourse which she introduced again at the end of the interview - a discourse of change and transformation. 'I enjoyed the beauty of the place, change of leaves in autumn, spring time there. That was a source of nourishment to me.'

This experience of nourishment was short lived. Time allowed in the garden was strictly limited. She also referred to being 'nourished' by other religious such as when one superior took the young religious for walks, allowing them to engage in normal conversation, or when a coadjutrix sister went outside prescribed behaviour and gave her extra food or when another gave her a hug one day when she knew that Dianne 'was having a hard time, which probably wasn't done'.

When it was time to leave the school, Dianne said that she 'felt relief' but a 'sense of sadness too'. Her sadness came from leaving a 'known place' where there had been a struggle which 'in itself brings a kind of bonding'. Within her narrative, it is possible to locate a sense that the difficult times will eventually be over, tests of faith are eventually passed, holidays come, and after two and a half years she left the school. There was nothing in her narrative which suggested that, in retrospect, there was anything within the formal system of the school which could be redeemed. The only saving graces were those she received outside the discourses of authority, even when they came from those in authority, such as Lillian McGee's granting of extra parlour time.

In the last few sentences of her narrative, Dianne again turned to a discourse of change and transformation in order to give meaning to her experience of Kerever Park - then and now. She concluded: 'It's

interesting that this place which was once so really contained and turned in on itself has become a place of openness, hospitality, open to a really wide range of people.' In this statement, she brings closure to her experience of Kerever Park by constructing it as transformed from a place of suffering and confinement to a place of openness and welcome.

Dianne believed that the social order of Kerever Park had remained unchanged because it was isolated from changes occurring in other parts of the world. She also believed that having one person in authority for so long had also resulted in resistance to change. When change did come, it came from the actions of others as a result of Vatican Two which she described as a 'time of profound change'. Her explanation of how this came about is similar to how McGrath explained change coming to the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta. 'It would be the responsibility of far-seeing men of standing within the Church' who would liberate the religious from the prevailing social order, rather than the religious who would liberate themselves.⁹²

Stories of Home

Both Elly and Elizabeth were also choir nuns and generally found the experience of Kerever Park a positive one. Within their narratives, both drew on the discourse of the school as home and both considered it to be similar to living in a family, although how they constructed themselves within this family differed. Patricia's experience as a coadjutrix sister stood in tension with the experience of these two religious and that of those already discussed. This tension signifies the classist arrangement of the Society in that period. Elly and Elizabeth were part of the public face of the family, the daughters of the family, while Patricia was part of a group who were largely hidden, who lived a separate life in which they were confined to the domestic sphere.

⁹² Madeleine Sophie McGrath, *These women? Women religious in the history of Australia, the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta 1888-1988*, Sydney, NSW University Press, c. 1988, p. 144.

For Elly, Kerever Park was very much what she considered to be home. As with Dianne, she had also attended Kerever Park as a child but unlike Dianne she 'felt at home, at ease from the minute . . . [she] went into that community' becoming a member of the family'.⁹³ Elly came to Kerever Park at age eight after having run away from another boarding school where she had been sent for health reasons. At the previous school, she felt that she didn't get the attention she needed but at Kerever Park she 'felt loved', particularly by the mistress general, Lillian McGee.⁹⁴ In her own home, life had been organised around the social life of her father who was involved in local politics, consequently her daily routine was often disrupted. In contrast, the highly structured and routine life of the school suited her well and she 'felt that everything at Kerever Park had been arranged for . . . [her] satisfaction' and that she 'was the important one'.⁹⁵ Over the years, she developed a particular attachment to Lillian McGee and her years there as a child continued to be happy. After completing her education at Rose Bay and having a year at home, she decided to join the order, as this gave her the opportunity to be with people she liked, where she knew the rules, and at the same time to serve God by giving her life up to him.⁹⁶ The fact that she felt so comfortable in the Society served to modify the discourse of love expressed through sacrifice and suffering. To some degree, she could justify that she was employing this discourse, giving up her life to serve God in what was then considered in the Catholic church to be the highest calling for a woman, as a religious, but she also knew that for her it really wasn't a great sacrifice as it 'gave her an excuse to be with people that . . . [she] liked' and where she 'knew all the rules'.⁹⁷

When Elly was sent back to Kerever Park as a young religious, she 'came

⁹³ E.B. 9 August 1995. Interview one.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

back to Mother McGee' whom she 'loved more than . . . [her] own mother'.⁹⁸ Yet there was a cost involved in being with this mother she loved. Elly recalled a childhood incident, in which she agreed to go without something she wanted, and for which she was cast, by Lillian McGee, as 'unselfish'.

EB: But [said Lillian McGee] Elly's not selfish, she doesn't mind. Well I did mind! But because she said I didn't I thought, no, I'm unselfish. I had that to live up to. I used to live on that for years and so another time when I came up here [as an adult] and she asked me to do something she said, you never say, no. And that was a great influence in my life and I had to learn to say no.⁹⁹

In this incident, Elly chose in her actions to identify with the values of the community,¹⁰⁰ but within herself she resisted - 'I did mind!'. As with Catherine, her feelings of rebellion were pushed underground for the sake of agreeing with her superior whom she loved and from whom she sought approval.

Elly spent nine years at the school as a religious. She was happy and successful in her teaching, she liked the structure of daily life and eventually she became mistress of discipline at the school, a role which involved, as she put it, 'keeping the children in order, making sure they were here on time, not a very nice role but I didn't mind it'.¹⁰¹ Her words in describing these duties echoed Lillian McGee's words, 'Elly's not selfish, she doesn't mind'. Even when Elly made mistakes, she commented that Lillian did not point these out to her - 'there was a kind of confidence there'.¹⁰² This intersection of recognition and autonomy on the one hand and security on the other, which Crawford et al. suggest

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ See Erskine Stuart, p. 40 where she writes that community life is dependent upon 'self-denial and self-repression'.

¹⁰¹ E.B. 18 August 1995. Interview two.

¹⁰² *ibid.*

is the basic construction of happiness,¹⁰³ seems to have operated in Elly's life there. She was given recognition and a degree of autonomy by being promoted and she felt secure in the knowledge that Lillian McGee had a degree of confidence in her which included not pointing out her mistakes to her. Elly recalled that this was not so for all the religious. She reported that there were some religious whom Lillian 'took to and treated' as she treated Elly but 'there were others that could never do anything right in her eyes', who had all their mistakes pointed out to them, and consequently 'they had a terrible time there'.¹⁰⁴ However, her life there was not 'all rosy' either, as she remembered how 'very Spartan' the daily life was, rising early, the cold which resulted in chilblains on her hands and the practices of 'mortification' including dry bread for morning tea.¹⁰⁵ Yet in spite of these difficulties, for Elly the discourse of love expressed through sacrifice and suffering was played in a minor key.

Within her recollections, God took on the image of the benevolent father: 'pretty much a stern father, maybe not a rent collector'.¹⁰⁶ In this section of the narrative, her reference to her image of God was overlaid by memories of her parents - a mother who was too strict and a father who was too lenient and could easily be won over.¹⁰⁷ As a teacher, she 'still saw . . . [God] as a father image. Someone in charge, maybe not as strict as that but someone who must not be offended'.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps this model, which reflected the benevolence and strictness of Lillian McGee, was also the model which informed how Elly maintained her role as mistress of discipline - someone who was in charge, with a degree of leniency but

¹⁰³ Crawford et al., p. 90.

¹⁰⁴ E.B. 9 August 1995. Interview one.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

who must not be offended.¹⁰⁹ As a child Elly, considered the school to be 'a family business, [with] mothers who looked after us and sisters who cooked for us'.¹¹⁰

As in all convent schools, the father was absent, although if the Church is considered to be male, with male priests having the power of the sacraments, then the power of the male was, as Barthes expresses it, 'everywhere around, he presses on all sides, he makes everything exist: he is all eternity, the creative absence'.¹¹¹ Additionally, the male, in the form of a male God, was also both present and absent, pressing on all sides at Kerever Park. There, priests from the nearby Chevalier College came each day to say mass. After mass, the priest would be given breakfast by a coadjutrix sister on his own in the front parlour and then leave. These priests also heard confessions of the religious and the children. Entries in the House Journal indicate visits by various other priests, bishops and male Church dignitaries to the school, most probably to say their daily obligatory mass. At these times, they might address the religious, as indicated in the following entry in the House Journal.

We had the privilege of a second Mass said by Bishop Gleeson of Maitland, who is spending a holiday in Bowral with two Monsignori who visited us on Jan 29th. He said an inspiring little word before beginning Mass, praying that the Holy Spirit might be very active in this house, work for the personal sanctification of each one of the Community and directing all our activities for the education of our children. He had a little friendly visit with us all, after his breakfast and also saw the Brothers and Father Keyeminski, who had assisted His Lordship at his Mass.¹¹²

While the priests visited to perform the required sacraments, such as Mass and confession, they remained distant, usually speaking to the

¹⁰⁹ An ex-student remembered Elly as having 'a fiery look . . . presence or whatever' and that 'she looked like a coiled spring that was very rebellious and . . . [you] knew that she could break the rules if she wanted to'. G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview one.

¹¹⁰ E.B. 9 August 1995. Interview one.

¹¹¹ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, selected and translated by Annette Lavers, London, Vintage, 1993 (1975), p. 51.

¹¹² House journal, 6 February 1944.

religious only in groups. On these visits, they were treated with deference, as indicated in the following extract from the House Journal. 'His Excellency, the Apostolic Delegate, paid us a visit this afternoon. He was accompanied by Monsignor Giles and saw the Community and children after his afternoon tea.'¹¹³ The many visits by Church dignitaries to Kerever Park may have been associated with the popularity of Bowral as a holiday destination. Unlike the priests, the religious of the Society took no holidays away from the convent.

At the end of her narrative, Elly summarised her experience of Kerever Park as one of family in which she was the much loved daughter and which 'mirror[ed] God's responsibility' for her with 'Mother Boydell in the garden and near her, Mother McGee inside'.¹¹⁴ Elizabeth also drew on a discourse of home to explain how she understood her experience of Kerever Park. She too received her education at a Sacred Heart school where, although she was away from her parents who lived overseas, she visited her grandparents at weekends and was generally happy. When she decided to be a religious, she investigated other orders but eventually, like Elly, went back to the nuns who had educated her and where she felt 'at home'.¹¹⁵ Her parents were accepting of her decision and Elizabeth commented that her mother was just happy that she was happy and that she had a 'lovely home'.¹¹⁶ This notion of her finding a 'lovely home' is in keeping with a comment which might be made about a daughter who marries and reflects Elizabeth's ongoing interpretation of her experience as one of home. Elizabeth liked the contemplative life which brought with it a degree of social isolation. She grew up as an only child after her younger brother died and commented that: 'Only children just have to get used to being alone. It's not loneliness. You sort of learn to live with

¹¹³ *ibid.* March 1944.

¹¹⁴ E.B. 9 August 1995. Interview one.

¹¹⁵ E.R. 2 September 1995. Interview two.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

yourself.¹¹⁷ So for her the contemplative life was something she enjoyed: 'I'm not an entirely confirmed contemplative but I like beauty and I like being with people but I also like times of silence and I like times of being alone.'¹¹⁸ She spent four years at Kerever Park in the mid 1950s and, while she did some teaching, most of her time was taken up with being in charge of the linen room and undertaking the role of sacristan which involved taking care of the chapel. Both roles allowed her quiet time alone and a degree of autonomy, however, she did not find life there easy. At times, the work was hard and mortification, arising out of the discourse of reparation, was a part of the day-to-day life. The religious had few physical comforts and were required to make formal offers of penance such as eating fish on Fridays and going without certain foods on certain days. In coping with these difficulties, Elizabeth said she likened it to being a young married person who accepts the difficult times for love of her husband and finds that she often needs to renew her decision to be with him as their life together progresses.

ER: But it wasn't too bad. When you are living through it you don't think it's too bad but looking back you think, 'How did I do it!' But I think I was so glad to be where I was that I would have done anything. I think if you feel you are married and things are tough and your husband loses a job, you are glad to be with him and I think I knew I wanted to be a religious of the Sacred Heart and I would have done anything to stay as religious of the Sacred Heart. And if you're doing something that you want to do there is peace about it, however hard it is.¹¹⁹

In her discussion about her vocation, she referred to it as 'a love affair with Jesus . . . and it's not just one call, it's a continual coming further'.¹²⁰ In this way, she entered into the discourse of love expressed through sacrifice and suffering, but for her the sufferings were not as severe as they seem to have been for some of the other religious. To some degree, it

117 *ibid.*

118 *ibid.*

119 *ibid.*

120 *ibid.*

is a modified discourse - loving through difficulties. Within the myth of home, Elly constructed herself as the dutiful and loving daughter while Elizabeth constructed herself as the loving spouse. As Elizabeth found meaning in comparing herself to a married person, she also aspired to a similar outcome for the children. She noted that she wanted them to 'have faith' and to prepare themselves for motherhood. She referred to the writings of Madeleine Sophie who was 'educating girls to be supportive of their husbands . . . to understand what was going on and communicate with their husbands at a deeper level, a more intellectual level'.¹²¹ Within this role of wife and mother, Elizabeth believed that women have power which can be 'used for good'. 'I think,' she commented, 'that it's amazing what a woman can do, what a good woman can do . . . they can influence a whole nation if they get going, maybe not as a nation but through the family'.¹²²

While Elizabeth did not include any references to openly challenging the social order, she did include some references to her private thoughts. She regretted the fact that the children were not at home, because she believed for children 'the best place is home'.¹²³ She likened Lillian McGee to a mother: 'I think she had that kind of mother's heart that you can forgive the kids anything'.¹²⁴ Yet she also commented that sometimes she 'felt she [Lillian McGee] took the children's side rather than ours'.¹²⁵

Within Elizabeth's narrative, while she constructed herself as the loving spouse, she also constructed herself as the good daughter. This latter construction also ran throughout the narratives of the religious discussed so far. Some of these good daughters are given acknowledgement within the immediate context, such as Catherine, while others aspired to become

¹²¹ E.R. 18 August 1995. Interview one.

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ *ibid.*

¹²⁴ E.R. 2 September 1995. Interview two.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*

the good daughters, as did Mary, Suzanne and Dianne. Within the Society, there was a strong discourse of the religious being cast as daughters. For example, Erskine Stuart refers to them as 'grown-up daughters'.¹²⁶ Additionally, in the narratives of the religious, as demonstrated here in Elizabeth's, Lillian McGee was constructed as the benevolent and demanding mother. Erskine Stuart writes that in the training of religious the ideal 'mother' of young religious shapes them not by harsh criticism but with 'a look, a word, a silence, and controlled by the almost imperceptible disapproval that, like a parent's momentary coldness, reaches further into the sensitive soul of a child than the loudest expostulation of lesser authorities'.¹²⁷ Perhaps this was the model of control in her teaching which Suzanne so aspired to and which Elly seemed to have achieved - those religious who 'just had to appear' and there would be order.¹²⁸

The constructions of the good daughter and the benevolent and demanding mother resonate throughout the narratives of the choir nuns. It was a home, as Elly expressed it, like a 'family business', with 'mothers who looked after us and sisters who cooked for us'.¹²⁹ This 'home' was in its physical form an upper middle class home - a country home of the wealthy - and, in keeping with an upper middle class home, there was also domestic help in the form of the coadjutrix sisters.

While the choir nuns got on with the work of teaching the children, behind the scenes and living a very separate life were the coadjutrix sisters. Patricia spent four years at Kerever Park. As discussed in chapter three, the sisters refer to their vocation as 'a Nazareth vocation', one of hidden service. Patricia also placed her experience within this meaning.

¹²⁶ Erskine-Stuart, p. 31.

¹²⁷ *ibid.* pp. 37-38.

¹²⁸ S.B. 25 October 1995, Interview one.

¹²⁹ E.B. 9 August 1995. Interview one.

as she expressed it, 'a sense of wanting to give everything to God'.¹³⁰ This included any 'kind of self-development' which wouldn't be promoted by being a sister 'because it was just domestic work'.¹³¹ Yet while Patricia embedded her narrative within the discourse of love for God expressed through sacrifice and suffering, some dissonance in this explanation was provided by her referral to the work they did as 'employment', thereby placing it within the context of social relations. The sisters were there to 'care for the house' and they were placed under the direction of a choir nun. 'Usually there was a choir nun who was in charge of it . . . then the sister did the actual work.'¹³² While the sisters undertook the work of 'caring for the house', they, in keeping with the life of domestic servants, had few 'dealings with the children' although they seemed to have been intensely interested in them. Patricia remembered that a choir nun would sit with them in community recreation time and often during this period the sisters would hear anecdotes about the children. Occasionally, they supervised recreations and taught needlework.

As discussed in the previous chapter, a number of the coadjutrix sisters resisted the role constructed for them, such as the sister who read the paper in the hen house. In contrast, Patricia commented that, when she was faced with issues she questioned, she pushed any desire to challenge underground. When a difference arose between her and others in the community, she accepted it, rather than challenging it, as 'the attitude of accepting and going on seemed to be preferable'.¹³³ Yet she also remembered how she questioned those in authority about the number of times she was moved, in comparison to other sisters who often remained in one convent for long periods of time. Patricia found these moves unsettling and while she commented that she gave the impression of adjusting easily she didn't. The response of the person questioned was

¹³⁰ P.R. 3 October 1995. Interview one.

¹³¹ *ibid.*

¹³² P.R. 10 October 1995. Interview two.

¹³³ *ibid.*

that she 'had lots of gifts and they were needed in particular places'.¹³⁴

Patricia also spoke about hard the sisters worked, often under difficult circumstances yet she described those she knew as remaining cheerful as they went about their physically demanding daily life: preparing meals, doing the washing, ironing, etc., for between sixty and seventy people. In reference to herself, Patricia remembered praying for 'the strength to go on'.¹³⁵ As did the other religious, Patricia also found the garden a source of nourishment, 'seeing the hills and the autumn changes'.¹³⁶ In both interviews Patricia spoke about the small piece of garden that a coadjutrix sister, Maud Burke, worked on for herself.

PR: She [Maud Burke] would have been in her seventies and she was very keen on Burke's Bank which was way down and it was just a wilderness and she would try and keep that clear of the worst of the weeds so she didn't get a great deal of satisfaction from it. She did plant daisies along it. You go down into the main garden, where you've got a bit of a creek and so you'd have to get across that and then try and keep down the weeds and undergrowth . . . I suppose it had become a jungle and she was trying to keep it from becoming a worse jungle. I'm not sure if she planted the big things that are there now but she did plant daisies which grew up in a rank sort of way.¹³⁷

In the second interview, Patricia again referred to this story saying that Maud organised her time so she could go out and work in this section of the garden in order to 'try to do something which pleased her. Something that remains under control'.¹³⁸ The piece of garden which Maud claimed lay beyond the park-like gardens, an area which was not suitable for vegetable growing and too difficult for formal garden beds. In this story of someone trying to keep an unwanted part of the garden under control, Patricia seemed to reflect the lives of the sisters. They worked behind the scenes, beyond the public areas, in activities which were physically

¹³⁴ *ibid.*

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

¹³⁷ *ibid.*

¹³⁸ P.R. 10 October 1995. Interview two.

demanding and not particularly rewarding and yet which kept the school on an even keel. Just as Patricia suggested that these visits to the garden sustained Maud, giving her something for herself which she was in control of, so too it seemed that these visits allowed Patricia to continue her 'attitude of acceptance' and the ability to control her own responses while conforming to the wishes of those in authority.

Within her narrative, Patricia seemed to hold fast to the accepted meaning of the lives of the sisters and to find sufficient personal meaning in that to give her a sense of 'purpose' and agency. Yet at the same time, she privately questioned that meaning and in the following section of her narrative, which came at the end of the second interview, revealed her sense of powerlessness within the system of authority to bring about change.

PR: He [God] had a special mission for us in giving us the particular gift. That very often in the hardship that we had to suffer were the means by which He helped the Society to continue to work in education. That even though we weren't personally involved in it that we were doing in His way as much towards the education of the children as the choir nuns were. We had the privilege of remaining in the background but also being very much loved by His Heart and being willing to be there because of what He had given to us.

CTJ: Is there anything else that you would like to say?

PR: I'd like to say that I think I did have a sense of change coming that was long overdue. A sense that I wished it had come long before because that was one of the reasons why I felt so very much drawn to the sisters. The desire to see that change but I didn't know how . . . I thought that we had grown, in the twentieth century, beyond the concept of being a two category type of religious life of the nineteenth century. That there was tremendous potential in the people who were the sisters that was not being developed and I saw that as a waste. I was just hoping that the powers that be, the ones who were in power, would be able to move more quickly than they did. ¹³⁹

Patricia began and ended her narrative with reference to the beauty of the

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

'whole atmosphere of the place'.¹⁴⁰ In between, she had spoken of the harshness of the lives which the sisters endured and yet their willingness to persist as cheerfully as possible while trying to find ways in which to nourish themselves. She spoke in detail of each sister who had spent long periods of time there including the deaths of these elderly women. She spoke about the depth of their spirituality. For example, Evelyn Stewart who was 'never missing at prayer' and Maud Burke who had a special devotion to Our Lady who, Maud felt, 'took the place' of her own mother who had died when she was eleven.¹⁴¹ At the end of her second interview, she referred to her many visits back to Kerever Park (since its closure as a school) and then turned to speak of the garden in particular. In these closing words she seemed to be looking back, not only on her time at Kerever Park, but also on the Society as a whole and in doing so she drew upon the discourse of progress. 'It's very precious, very precious to me because I've seen the garden change, develop and grow with the trees . . . I always walk around the garden and say hello to all the trees and I remember when different ones were planted and what they're like now; what we've lost, what has died and I see improvements there too.'¹⁴²

Patricia's narrative also echoes the discourse contained within the story of the Garden of Eden which has its richness and its difficulties, as in Suzanne's and Mary's narratives. The ending of the tiered system may be considered to be progress yet it came too late for many sisters. After this system ended, the Society offered to support the sisters in furthering their education. Patricia was one of those who took up this offer.

Conclusion

Mackinnon has urged historians to use collective biography as a way of ensuring that 'the complexity and diversity of individual women's lives

¹⁴⁰ P.R. 3 October 1995. Interview one.

¹⁴¹ P.R. 10 October 1995. Interview two.

¹⁴² *ibid.*

will defy easy categorisation' hence forcing 'historians to write their conclusions with considerable care'.¹⁴³ The contribution of poststructuralist theory has challenged the reading of historical data as succinct and leading to neat conclusions. Similarly, the shift to a literary paradigm has revealed that there is an integrity about a person's experience which denies full appropriation of meaning. The work of researchers such as Crawford et al. has indicated that while subjectivity is constructed within the social order we must still, as individuals, struggle for meaning and it is this struggle which gives us our sense of uniqueness and our sense of individual subjectivity.¹⁴⁴ Hence, there is a need to tread warily in gathering together a few neat points as the sum of what can be gleaned from narratives employed in any historical project, yet it is the brief of the historian to work towards such a gathering.

In her work with the narratives of women, Mackinnon found, 'a strong sense of self'¹⁴⁵ yet, as Theobald has warned, this self cannot be essentialised.¹⁴⁶ The data reported in this chapter reveals that the self is a shifting process as the person and the historian seek to discover, through the narrative interview, how the person experienced a particular part of her life and who she was, how she thought and acted at a particular time. The narrative is a construction just as was the original experience because, as Shotter suggests, we construct our experience of the world in what the facts of the world permit us to say.¹⁴⁷ In examining the narratives of the religious, it is possible to see the discourses of the Society, the social memory of the group, running strongly throughout the narratives, that is, the discourse of the mysterious and ineffable love of God, the discourse of love expressed through sacrifice and suffering, and the discourse of conformity and obedience to those in authority. Within

¹⁴³ Mackinnon, pp. 101-102.

¹⁴⁴ Crawford et al., p. 155.

¹⁴⁵ Mackinnon, p. 101.

¹⁴⁶ Theobald, p. 39.

¹⁴⁷ Shotter, p. 125.

the narratives, the last two discourses tended to dominate. What was particularly pervasive was the degree to which each of the religious felt unable to publicly challenge or question the dominant social order. The reifying of the discourse of conformity and obedience to those in authority as being synonymous with the will of God provides an explanation for this behaviour. So does the more pragmatic explanation of a desire to be acceptable to a community in which these young women had decided to live their lives. Yet these discourses were not the ultimate authority for how individuals constructed meaning within the experience. Experiences beyond the social group, as with Mary and Suzanne, brought new discourses which threatened to destabilise the prevailing social order. Other discourses which belonged to the social memory of the Society were picked up, emphasised and interpreted in a new way, as with Suzanne in her emphasis on the value of each child. Personal agency was achieved through decisions made which resisted the hegemonic practices of the social order, as when Catherine over-stayed her parlour time or when Dianne and Mary reached out to respond to the emotional needs of the children. In the narratives it was possible to see how individuals moved in and out of melding with the values of the community, of conforming to them at least in public while privately seeking to wrestle their own meaning for the experience. What is immanent in the narratives is the struggle to achieve a sense of personal integrity and agency. Yet this struggle is and was not seamless and even. It ebbed and flowed, sometimes being achieved in the immediate context, usually as a result of actions taken on the basis of personal meanings; sometimes it was achieved later when private understandings were validated. The latter was the case with Mary whose beliefs about how to relate to young children were later acknowledged by Lillian McGee and at the Froebel College. It was also the case with Patricia who, while accepting the discourses which validated the existence of a tiered system of religious, also persisted with her own beliefs that the system needed to be dismantled. Ultimately, Suzanne who both aspired to and rejected the ways in which the religious were expected to control the children found a

meaning of control which was more in keeping with her privately held understandings.

The discourse of the school as home is also strong within many of the narratives. In relation to this discourse, the religious interviewed were either positioned as daughters or as domestic workers, with Lillian McGee being constructed as the benevolent and demanding mother, a position which reflected not only aspects of the female condition but also the image of God as beneficent ruler. Additionally, focusing on the text as a whole, identifying patterns of expression and the meaning of certain memories, reveals how the person saw herself as positioned within the social order of the school, for example, as one who identifies, one who resists, one who is an outsider, etc. Yet as Crawford et al. indicate and the narratives explored here evidence, positions are not always stable. Resistance and identification are part of the process of daily life. Additionally, for some, identification at one point in time, as with Elly who worked so hard to be a good daughter, must be forfeited for uncertainty and resistance at another point in time. Catherine, who initially within the interview, melded with the values of the community, later allowed her construction of the experience as a golden period, to be challenged by her own memories.

In the construction of the narratives, it was possible to see how each person sought to bring closure to the experience, arriving at a place with which she could achieve a sense of resolution. In the case of the narratives reported here, the meanings within the narratives are mainly located in the socio-symbolic world of Christianity: the king's garden, the Garden of Eden, the golden period and transformation. This location is not surprising, given that the religious remain members of the Society and hence, to some degree, aligned with the Church. However, modernity and the associated discourse of change and progress was also drawn upon for meaning. In looking back, they sought to identify changes in practices within the Society and its schools which were in

keeping with this discourse of improvement.

A conclusion which may be drawn from this is that what happens within a school is not the sum of the components of its ideology, nor is the ideology without hope of being re-written. It was the Society which sent Suzanne and Mary to educational institutions where they received progressive discourses of education. Thus it is possible to see how those in authority within an organisation such as this one both resisted change and at the same time fostered it. All the religious interviewed for this history believed that the system in which they lived at Kerever Park was in need of change yet, for some, depending on their own personal disposition and background, the experience was more satisfactory than for others. Each allowed the social order of the community to construct the way in which she lived and thought by drawing on the discourses which were available to her within the Society and the wider arena, in particular a discourse of family in which they positioned themselves in roles traditionally associated with their gender. Each also sought to construct her own meaning of the experience which would both define it and allow her to continue to live within it. Just as Dianne found meanings which named her suffering and which allowed her to continue to endure the experience, Elizabeth found meaning by imagining her life as that of a young married person. The ebb and flow of meaning from the earlier lives of the religious to their time at Kerever Park and from the social memory of the group to the experience of the individual also ran from the private lives of the religious to their interactions with the children. The religious were engaged in the struggle to find meaning for their lives and a position within a community. How they found meaning in and lived out that struggle impacted on how they interacted with the children they cared for and taught. What this was like for the children is addressed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

LEAVING HOME: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE STUDENTS

In the twenty-two years in which Kerever Park operated as a school, according to the School Register, 430 children attended the school.¹ Some came for relatively short periods² of less than a year while their parents were overseas or to make their first communion. Others came in kindergarten and stayed for seven or eight years.³ The average stay was three years.⁴ The youngest student to come was four years old, although most children were aged between five and twelve.⁵ The majority of children came from a rural area (40% from a rural property and 12.6% from a rural town). However, a significant number (34.7%) came from Sydney.⁶ The School Register includes reference to twenty-two students as being the daughters of old girls. It also evidences that nearly three quarters of the children went on to Rose Bay.⁷

Nine ex-students were interviewed for this research. Two of this group, Dianne and Elly, later became members of the order and spent time teaching at the school. Their interviews have been discussed in the previous chapter, although they will also be referred to in discussion throughout this chapter. In analysing the interviews of the ex-students, it is possible to see similar themes threading throughout them: the reasons for being sent to boarding school, emotional preparation for such an experience, the impact of early experiences within the school, the

¹ Kerever Park, School register, unpublished material, 1944-1965, Rose Bay archives, Sydney.

² *ibid.* Thirteen students came for one term, one student for two weeks, and six students came for two terms.

³ *ibid.* Thirty students stayed for six years, twelve for seven years and four for eight years.

⁴ See Appendix X. This figure was calculated on the students who stayed at least one year. Those who stayed for an additional term were taken down to the nearest year, while those who stayed an additional two terms were taken up to the nearest year. The school operated on a three term year.

⁵ See Appendix X.

⁶ See Appendix IX.

⁷ Kerever Park, School register. Note is made there that 297 went on to Rose Bay and that thirty-seven went on to other Sacred Heart schools.

interaction of prior experiences with those at Kerever Park, the hegemonic practices of the school, and the desire to gain a sense of agency. However, adopting a thematic approach in reporting the experiences which relate to such themes would do a disservice to those involved and to the task of this thesis. One of the main goals of the thesis is to allow the previously unheard voices of those who were not in positions of authority within a school, especially the students, to emerge. Another, and perhaps more central goal, is to focus on the school experience itself: what it was like for individuals; what meanings they ascribed to the experience both then and now; and how they positioned themselves within the power relations of the school. It is a central contention of this thesis that such a focus provides insight into the formation of consciousness within the school setting. In order to achieve these goals, a case study approach has been adopted, as in the previous chapter. In writing these case studies, I have sought to relate as closely as possible the story as told to me by the participants. Where possible, I include key words and also larger extracts from the interviews. Yet while allowing the voices of the students to surface, I have also sought to identify the discourses which impacted on particular students and to explore the ways in which what was offered to the students within the formal and informal curriculum was taken up by them, used to give meaning to their experience, and to guide their behaviour, especially in positioning themselves within the power relations of the school.

Within each case study, it is possible to see, even within the arch of common themes, the uniqueness of each situation and the individuality in the experiences which dominate the memories of those who participated. It is also possible to see how each person sought, within the interview, to find meaning from the past which provided insight into their present subjectivity. As in the previous chapter, the work of Chanfrault-Duchet, Foucault, and Crawford et al. is drawn upon to help tease out an interpretation of the interviews. In turning to these theories, I have tried to apply them in a way which is not intrusive to the central

narrative of each person. Rather, I have sought to employ them in a manner which provides insight into how each person sought to find meaning and agency within the school setting.

Sisters

Emily and Michelle arrived at Kerever Park in 1944, the first year of the permanent foundation. The freeing of enclosure on the religious, as practised while at the Rift and which led to outings for the children to local parks, riding bikes on the street and climbs up The Gib, ended. The establishment of a permanent school resulted in the religious and the children all being confined to the grounds of the school. In the year of their arrival, Emily was seven and Michelle had just turned five. They were the eldest of seven children, although some of the younger children were born while Emily and Michelle were at Kerever Park. They came from a regional city where their father managed local farming properties. Due to the large number of small children in the family, respite for the mother came in the form of a local woman the sisters called 'Nair.' Hence they were used to being cared for by someone other than their own mother. As with a number of the other ex-students interviewed, a composite number of reasons led to their being sent to boarding school: a large family, the desire for a better standard of education than that offered locally, the centrality of religion in the lives of their parents and the recommendation of other parents. Additionally, as with other ex-students, Michelle went at a young age in order to accompany her older sister.⁸

The interviews with the two sisters (they were interviewed separately) differed markedly. Michelle remembered many details about the experience and was highly reflective about the impact on her adult life. In contrast, apart from a number of key experiences, Emily struggled to give

⁸ The School Register reveals that thirty-seven sets of sisters (including one of three sisters) were jointly registered.

information about her day-to-day life there. The two interviews also differed in the stance each person took in relation to the dominant social model. Michelle tended to both accept some of the values and practices she considered to be espoused at Kerever Park (in Chanfrault-Duchet's terms 'melding' with hegemonic values)⁹ and to resist others. Emily, on the other hand, avoided identification and took a more ironic position, drawing on a discourse of progress whereby she compared those practices with contemporary ones.

Within her interview, Emily's responses were short and often, when I asked her to elaborate on a particular point, a key phrase used was: 'I can't remember.'¹⁰ As in other interviews, Emily, in the initial part of the interview, remembered an early experience at the school which seemed to have had a significant impact on her. She began her interview by stating: 'I remember the day that I arrived there with my younger sister. I was only seven and she was five and it was a sunny day.' After briefly mentioning the extensions which took place in the first year and another family from her local area who also sent their child there (although she noted that the child stayed only for a short period), Emily moved on to recall an experience which she referred to again later in the interview and which seemed to have been her most vivid memory.

ED: They must have had about thirty acres and they had cows and we used to go down there and pick the blackberries. We were allowed to have the blackberries for dinner if we didn't eat them. They would provide the cream from the cows for the blackberries. There were a lot of snakes there down the paddock near the river and the nuns used to kill them. I remember watching them, one day, just winding themselves into a hole.

⁹ Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet, 'Narrative structures, social models, and symbolic representation in the life story', in Sherna Berger Gluck & Daphne Patai (eds), *Women's words: the feminist practice of oral history*, New York, Routledge, 1991, p. 80.

¹⁰ E.D. 21 May 1996. Interview one. All further quotes which relate to Emily are taken from this interview. Emily found it very difficult to extend her answers and often responded with this phrase. It was, therefore, difficult to check for meaning and to encourage extension of answers.

Viewed in isolation, this memory about the blackberries and the snakes seems simply to have been an unusual event, which would explain its retention. However, examination of the interview as a whole suggests that this experience may be taken as a metaphor for her experience of Kerever Park: an experience of happily going about her daily life (looking for blackberries) and having something happen which both shocked and to some degree fascinated her (watching a snake being killed).

Emily seemed to have been quite accepting, perhaps even hopeful ('It was a sunny day') about going to boarding school. She was aware that her mother was not satisfied with the education they were receiving in the Catholic school at home where there were almost one hundred children in each class. However, when I pressed her about how she found it when she was actually at Kerever Park, she moved away from speaking in the first person singular to speaking in the second person and commented that because the local Catholic school was over-crowded 'you got sent off to boarding school'. This comment was accompanied by a laugh which gave her response an ironic element, which seemed to serve the purpose of distancing her from approval of this action. After then discussing the fact that her brothers were also sent to boarding school, she remembered an experience with her first teacher which seemed to have shaken her initial confidence in herself: 'I remember my maths was good but my reading was weak. That was the horror [laughs] of the nun who was teaching us.' In response to this revealed weakness, the religious in question then set out to rectify this problem.

ED: She just took me in hand one afternoon and we went through it and I was alright after that. It was a bit upsetting sort of thing because I did the Maths part alright but the English part, the reading and writing was, you know when you are in a school that has one hundred in kindergarten or first class when you go there, you don't get a lot of, you know, so that was fixed in one afternoon, I remember [laughs].

The experience of reading to the teacher and the teacher's response was obviously painful for Emily and perhaps a shock to her. In her subsequent explanation of why she was not good at reading, she offered a defence of her alleged weakness, again distancing herself from approval of the teacher's action. She also acknowledged later that the subsequent experience in which the teacher 'took . . . [her] in hand' to help her with this problem was 'distressing'. Emily also appeared to have been shocked when she was taken to Bowral by an unknown parent of another child to have a tooth out: 'She took me into Bowral and I had an injection and I had my tooth out and I went back. In these days, they wouldn't do that. They would prepare you.' However, an even more traumatic experience for her was the impact of a polio epidemic.

In class, Emily sat next to the first child at the school to contract polio so that she too caught it and spent three weeks in hospital, where all she 'thought about was that you were OK'. In talking about this experience, Emily tied it into memories of being taught about Henry VIII.

ED: The worst thing we had was the polio epidemic. They had . . . [name of student who first contracted the disease], well she was in hospital for a year or more. She always used to have callipers and things and when she went to Rose Bay she was up in the infirmary but she was very bright up the top. She used to sit next to me in the particular year she got it. I can't remember what year it was. I can't remember exactly what year. I remember we used to do a bit of history then and, I don't remember exactly what it was. It was just ordinary history. In those days, Henry VIII was [laughs] regarded as a terrible person. Well, he was, but for different reasons.

In this extract, it appears that the student who originally contracted the disease came back to Kerever Park in callipers but later in the interview Emily noted that this student was a special friend until she got polio, 'then she appeared again at Rose Bay', not returning to Kerever Park after the illness. In her interview, Emily spoke quite extensively about polio and about subsequent discussions she has had as an adult, including with health professionals, about the advisability of being confined to bed as a

way to combat the disease. She compared this with those who had not received such treatment and suffered permanent damage as a result. Her lengthy discussion about this topic, in comparison to her lack of detail and discussion about other experiences, indicates the intensity of its impact on her and perhaps the realisation that she too could have suffered permanent damage as a result of this illness. In other interviews, ex-students also spoke about illnesses, and in some cases deaths, which occurred at the school or in their families. In no case did they report any extensive discussions between themselves and adults, including teachers, regarding these traumatic incidents, so that it was largely left to the children to make their own meanings. In some cases, as in the case of Judith who will be discussed later, their meanings were not accurate. Emily's linking of the polio epidemic to Henry VIII who was 'regarded as a terrible person' gives rise to speculation that she may have linked her sickness into some negative understanding of herself.

Emily gave little indication that, as a child, she either privately or publicly confronted the hegemonic practices of Kerever Park in her time, nor that she identified with them. The events which were clearest in her mind were the ones in which she seems to have suffered a degree of trauma. However, one recollection in which she noted that they were required to learn St Matthew's Passion gospel reflected some resistance which may have surfaced while she was at the school. In discussing the choice of this gospel as compared to one of the others, she commented: 'They had the other ones [other gospels] but no, you had to learn his.' In looking back from an adult perspective at many of the practices, she adopted an ironic position by accompanying her comments with a laugh, by moving into speaking in the second person and by comparing past practices with contemporary ones. For example, on discussing having to learn the catechism by heart: 'It was just one of those things you learnt by heart, I think [laughs]. I don't know if you understood it. With the language it was in those days, you wouldn't have understood it, whereas these days things are made very much down to earth.' While her comparison of past

practices with current ones and her ironic positioning is in keeping with Chanfrault-Duchet's notion of the picaresque model in which 'change is confronted through a questioning of the dominant social values',¹¹ there was no sense in which Emily viewed herself as one who effects change. Change seemed simply to have happened in the intervening period and she was the powerless recipient of what had happened earlier. However, this thematic reference of comparison does bring into play a discourse of progress - a belief that the passage of historical time brings with it practices which are more sympathetic and helpful to human beings.

In examining the interview as a whole and the experiences which Emily remembered, there was a pattern of events occurring suddenly for which she was unprepared and which seem to have been, in varying degrees, traumatic. In many of her recollections, there was evidence of distancing herself from associated emotions when she moved into answering in the second person. For example, when asked if she would have liked her parents to visit her during the term, 'I don't know if you could have then', or laughing when she spoke about experiences which would usually give rise to painful feelings such as when she spoke about the teacher 'taking her in hand' or being sent to boarding school. Perhaps these traumatic experiences were the 'snakes' in the school experience for Emily, experiences from which she sought to distance herself ('winding . . . into a hole'), particularly from the fear arising from these assaults on her sense of competency (as in the reading incident) or on her body (as in the case of the dentist and polio). Yet there was also some fascination, especially in the experience of polio, which, as an adult, she has discussed with a variety of people.

Emily also remembered some experiences she enjoyed, such as drawing and playing games, especially on feast days, and horse riding. She noted that she found the classes more interesting than those she had received in the local school at home, however she could remember few details about

¹¹ Chanfrault-Duchet, p. 81.

them. Unlike other ex-students, she did not refer to forming specific friendships beyond that with the child who contracted polio. It was the traumatic events which were clearest and discussed in the most detail, hence supporting the contention by Crawford et al. that it is the experiences in which the search for intelligibility has been difficult due to unfamiliarity, conflict, contradiction or lack of resolution which are most paramount in our memories.¹² In contrast, it is either material which is mundane and trivial or that which is highly problematic, too threatening or painful that we forget.¹³ When, in the interview, I referred to her difficulty in remembering details of her experiences, Emily responded: 'Things as a child you don't remember.'

In contrast to Emily, her sister Michelle remembered much specific detail about her experience at the school and was able to share her thoughts and responses about many issues. She was just five when she went to the school and she described it as 'a big adventure' although she was 'a bit terrified'.¹⁴ In the first few minutes of the interview, Michelle introduced two themes which ran throughout her interview: being 'brought up like little nuns' and 'being good'. Throughout her interview, as in the following extract, she turned to the discourses of psychology, as she moved back and forth between reflecting on her school experiences and discussing the impact of those experiences on her adult life.

MF: The whole day was organised around religion. I don't think we had to go to Mass every morning. Prayer and silence. I remember everywhere we went we had to be in these little lines or 'the ranks' as they were called. Discipline was a very important part of our training. My husband is a diabetic and I look back and think we had to be very disciplined about our food and so I found the training useful. I was not very good at public speaking, probably because we had to be so quiet and obedient, as well as

12 June Crawford, Susan Kippax, Jenny Obyx, Una Gault & Pam Benton, *Emotion and gender: constructing meaning from memory*, London, Sage, 1992, p. 9.

13 *ibid.* pp. 155-158.

14 M.F. 5 June 1996. Interview one. All further quotes which relate to Michelle are taken from this interview

being shy. We always looked up to a leader. Perhaps the nun was the leader. They would speak and you would listen.¹⁵

Unlike Emily, Michelle reported no traumatic experiences. In contrast, she indicated that she worked hard at trying 'to be good'. She remembered that 'there was a lot of discipline' and 'sitting very still with your hands in your lap for long periods of time'. For her, being good was about trying to follow the 'set of rules'. She referred to the Weekly Exemptions and, as an adult, viewed them as a 'character building sort of thing and a record of your behaviour'. Her description of these events illustrates Foucault's notion of the self-monitoring individual who constructs herself/himself in keeping with the demands of the culture and the social group.¹⁶

MF: It was rather like going to confession. You had to work out what you had done wrong. So you were weighing up the rights and wrongs and your moral character was forming. I don't know what you were doing wrong but you had to do something against their system. It was a system of judging behaviour.

Michelle commented that one of her earliest memories was the celebration of her sixth birthday. In the early years of the school, when the numbers were smaller and the school had a less institutional character, the younger children had a birthday party which involved the whole school. In this experience, Michelle brought together the centrality of religion in the life of the school, a desire to be special and the unquestioning acceptance of what was taught.

MF: One of my earliest memories was my sixth birthday and we celebrated it out on the verandah on the front of the building and my grandparents wanted to know what food I wanted. I wasn't keen on cake and watermelon was my favourite fruit, so they brought two huge watermelons and I remember they went around the whole school. Everyone in the school sat at tables on the verandah and celebrated my birthday and they all had a piece of watermelon. And you know the parable of the loaves and

15 Michelle's interview transcripts were carefully edited by her so that they now read more like a carefully written document rather than the unedited words of an interview.

16 Lois McNay, *Foucault and feminism*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992, p. 61.

fishes? I thought that I had fed the whole school - a miracle! That was really quite an exciting thing for me at the time.

This experience of something being miraculous was not isolated for Michelle. She remembered being in the chapel when there was an earth tremor and, when it stopped, she thought 'that God was saving us'. For Michelle, this God was distant, watchful and benevolent, but required that certain actions be performed: 'There all the time when we remember to pray. Watching over us.' The retelling of this same incident by another ex-student who was at the school in this period also indicated an image of a God who was all powerful and benevolent.

MM: I can remember when she [the religious in question] put the fear of the Lord into us. We were in the chapel, which was upstairs, and there was an earth tremor and because it was upstairs, I suppose, we were quite aware of the fact that the room was moving and then suddenly a great crack appeared in the ceiling and with that was a great noise. And poor old Mother . . . in a quite maniacal screech she called: The Lord be praised! Until that we were alright but that sort of unnerved us all.¹⁷

Michelle also remembered believing that she had a guardian angel and praying to her for protection, as did another ex-student who was at the school in the 1960s and who still prays to her guardian angel as it makes her 'feel safe'.¹⁸ Analysis of the interviews supports the view that safety and reward from God was seen to be possible, yet generally it had to be earned, usually by prayer. The veiled side of this discourse of the beneficent God is the vengeful and punishing God - one who, because of the failures of humans, such as a failure to pray as Michelle's comments suggest, allows catastrophe to occur.

Michelle understood well that reward had to be earned and she believed that the religious were well advanced in this endeavour. She considered them to be 'like saints', although she 'found it very hard to talk to nuns

¹⁷ M.M. 18 April 1996. Interview one.

¹⁸ J.E. 18 November 1996. Interview one.

personally. They were on another level. They never ate with us and because they talked about manna from heaven we really believed they must have lived on Holy Communion.' By giving up their lives to God these women were, in her view, 'a step on the ladder closer' to God and would be the recipients of greater 'reward'. In keeping with this perception of the religious, Michelle worked hard at earning her own rewards by satisfying the expectations of those in authority.

Within the interview, Michelle made a number of statements which referred to her desire to be special and to her sense of agency when she achieved her goal: 'Everybody wanted to be the chosen one.' 'You were all trying to achieve as best you can but only one person could get the prize.' 'I was captain of the cricket eleven for one term. It was a very important thing.' In such comments she seemed, as a child, to have aligned herself with the dominant values of the school. The anticipated reward was her receiving public recognition, yet her melding with the values of the community also seems to have been based on a degree of fear. In contrast to being recognised through achievement, being isolated from the other children was the outcome of not obeying the rules.

MF: They didn't use physical punishment. Not the strap. Usually deprivation. You might have gone without the evening meal or not allowed to join the others for afternoon tea. You were really set aside from the other children. Everyone knew that that person had done something wrong or it was read out . . . everyone wanted acceptance and suddenly you weren't. You had done something wrong.

She also remembered the importance of 'self-sacrifice' and 'self-denial', such as giving your pocket money to the missions - something which she still practises in her daily life through putting off small pleasures in hope of a reward.

Michelle admitted that she felt isolated from her own family and that 'we lost a lot of closeness as a family by being away'. This removal also resulted in a sense of being on her own so that, 'if you had a problem,

even if you were lonely you had to solve that yourself'. She revealed a sense of disruption and loss about being at boarding school: 'I missed the seasons because we were always moving in the seasons. We couldn't plant a seed now and find it there later. It would have been harvested and used. A lack of continuity. You look at that in retrospect.' At school, the children were expected to be strong and not to show affection to each other. Her recollection here revealed both her childhood identification with the community of children and her adult questioning of some of the hegemonic practices.

MF: The only thing I feel we missed a bit was affection. Maybe it was wrong to show feelings and so even now when they [the religious] give you a little kiss we accept that but we were never encouraged to be affectionate to each other at school. For example, putting your arm around someone. You might show some concern and be helpful and sympathetic if someone fell over. On the whole you were not meant to show feelings. I think that attitude came through. Even if you hurt yourself, you were meant to be strong.

Her recollection of being 'strong' echoes the narrative of Dianne, discussed in the previous chapter, who incorporated a discourse of 'being strong' as a way of coping with her life there, both as a child and as a religious. Michelle also believes that they were not encouraged to express themselves or to question authority. She attributes her adult difficulty with public speaking to this practice. In response to it, she particularly encouraged her own children to 'express their feelings and aspirations [and] to communicate'.

Michelle's consistent reference to the impact of past practices on adult life drew upon discourses associated with Freudian psychology. In one section of her interview, Michelle makes an overt reference to this understanding:

MF: I went to a talk the other night and a psychiatrist was guest speaker. He wanted us all to go back to childhood. And I thought that, if you had six primary school years with the nuns, that their attitude affected you far more than that of your parents in later

years. We were required to write what my mother called the bread and butter letter after every holiday. You would be expected to thank our mothers for our holiday and for having us, so you felt this distance from your parents. The next little ones in the family, maybe they had more chance for the mothers to love them to be closer because the older ones weren't there. People used to get letters and it was nice to get letters. If you did not receive one on a particular day, they would say your mother is busy. She had other babies to look after.

This extract also draws upon a discourse which is part of Australian social memory - the lost child - one who is separated from and lost to her/his parents. The place of this discourse in Australian consciousness is reflected in Frederick McCubbin's painting of *The Lost Child* which depicts a young child lost in the bush.

As with other ex-students who reported finding daily life demanding and limited, reading books provided escape. Michelle remembered her parents giving Emily and her a copy of *The Water Babies* and the religious reading it aloud to the children: 'I remember the soothing part of the stories . . . Being taken away from your own self into someone else's lives. Expanding our imagination . . . I suppose it was relaxing. You didn't have to perform.' It may have been that she also identified with Tom, the chimney sweep in the story who suffered from the harsh expectations of his master until, as a water baby, he found a mother figure who provided physical affection. Michelle was not the only ex-student who referred to finding some comfort in books and imagery - comfort which was related to the lack of affection in the school setting. Judith remembered liking a certain picture of Our Lady:

JH: In kindergarten we had the icon of the Black Virgin . . . it was a image that was comforting . . . this Black Madonna had a child and there was something warm about it . . . it was the whole stance of the image. It is Our Lady of Good Succour.¹⁹

¹⁹ J.H. 1 June 1996. Interview one.

In contrast, Gabrielle remembered that the infants mistress used to make naughty children kneel in front of a picture of the Holy Family: 'When you are in boarding school, holy families aren't really something . . . that you want to be gazing at. You are not with your family.'

Within her interview, Michelle used the word 'we' often. In some instances, she used this when she spoke of herself and her sister but often it was an indication of her identification with the community of school children. Perhaps this identification provided her with a sense of safety and a sense of family, for example, since during the war there were deaths among the families. Michelle noted that: 'When someone lost a parent, that was felt by all the school. It was said in hushed tones.' As with other reports of death or illness within the interviews, it appears the event was spoken of only briefly by the religious, with little opportunity for the children to explore publicly the meaning of such occurrences. She remembered being taught that the Sacred Heart community was 'special' and as a result that in comparison to other religious orders: 'We were number one.' She also identified as someone from 'the land' which 'was really important to us'. As with other ex-students, she noted that she could still recall where various students came from and has retained, to the present day, a number of her friendships from Kerever Park. Yet while Michelle often seemed to identify with the children, melding with the group in her reflections, there were sections in which she seemed to locate herself as an 'outsider'. This was particularly in relationship to those children who were the daughters of former students: 'Some children were there because their mothers had been to a Sacre Coeur convent and that was a very important reason for them to be educated at Kerever Park. We didn't have that experience.' This also occurred when other girls, especially those from Sydney, reported their father's professional standing, while she had no idea about how to locate the status of a father who managed farms.

Her understanding of the notion of management, which came from her father's work, also provided her with a way of understanding how the school operated, its hierarchical nature and the outcome if rules were broken.

MF: Mother McGee was larger than life. She was the manager of the school. She wasn't the senior Reverend Mother, she was the second in command but she oversaw the school . . . She could be very stern and what she said was law and you didn't want to ever go against her direction. She ran everything very smoothly. Then it was like subcontracting to the next teachers who then took you for class. You didn't see her all the time but when she was around we would smile and curtsy.

Michelle noted that English literature, mathematics and hand writing were important and that they learnt social studies, geography and mainly English history. She remembered studying about Church history and learning about architecture and the history of art by studying the chapels and cathedrals around the world. She remembered doing choral work in singing, learning the catechism and the piano, darning, singing hymns including some in Latin, and spending time drawing and painting in her spare time. The details she recalled about these day-to-day activities evidences the importance she placed on them in her aspiration to be 'good'. The friends she made at Kerever Park are still her friends and the faith in God she acquired there has seen her through 'difficult situations where all else fails'. In summary, she described her experience there as 'enjoyable', 'sheltered' and 'protected from outside influences', yet she acknowledged that they were taught never to question authority or what they were taught and 'to value what we had and to be grateful'.

Both Emily and Michelle presented as students who felt the isolation from their family, although this seemed to have been moderated, to some degree, by the fact that they had been cared for by someone other than their own mother before they came to the school. Both indicated an openness to going to boarding school, although Emily's experience of some traumatic events seemed to have dominated the experience for her.

In contrast, Michelle was not subjected to any personal trauma, although her willingness to be 'good' stemmed both from her desire to be special and from her fear of the outcomes if she broke the rules. Her understanding of the culture was that following the rules led to reward and public recognition. Breaking them would lead to isolation and perhaps humiliation. Her image of God was similar, in that God kept you safe if you remembered to pray.

It may have been that Emily also achieved a degree of recognition while at the school (Michelle reported that her sister, unlike herself, was the recipient of a number of prizes) but as Crawford et al. argue it is events which are unfamiliar or which contain some conflict, contradiction or lack of resolution which are paramount in our memories. What dominated Emily's memories were events which were to some degree traumatic. In contrast, Michelle remembered much detail from her day-to-day life there and has kept a collection of holy cards from that time as well as her first communion and confirmation certificates. As an adult, Michelle criticised some of the hegemonic practices and found value in others. The criterion for this judgement was the impact of the practices on her adult life. In a rather pragmatic way, those practices which she has used and found helpful she condoned, while she questioned those she has not found helpful. In contrast, Emily did not reflect upon the impact of the hegemonic practices on her adult life and instead chose to view some practices as acceptable because she enjoyed them and others as questionable in comparison with contemporary practices. It seems that neither sister saw herself as being able to openly challenge any of the practices while at the school and there is little indication that they resisted privately. To some degree, there was an element of survival about their experiences. For Emily, this was clearer in regard to the traumatic events which befell her, while for Michelle her hope was that she would be recognised if she managed to avoid breaking the rules. Their experience stands in contrast to that of Marie who was also at the school in this period yet who felt loved and who found a sense of personal agency there.

Marie

Marie also went to Kerever Park in the first year of the permanent foundation and, as with Elly, reported in the previous chapter who later became a religious in the order, for her it was a very positive experience. Marie was four when she began at the school but it was not intended that she begin at such an early age. Her older sister had suffered from a number of chronic illnesses and a doctor advised that 'country air'²⁰ would help. An additional motivation for the family was that they lived in Sydney where the war led to the 'possibility of . . . being invaded'.²¹ Marie accompanied her parents and her older sister to Kerever Park and it was intended that the family would settle the sister in and then return home accompanied by Marie. When the sister was unsettled at being left, Lillian McGee suggested that Marie stay overnight to help her settle.

MM: So reluctantly they [her parents] allowed me to stay the night and then came and took the two of us out the next day, which was Sunday . . . then once again she was distraught on the Sunday evening when we were leaving for home and once again, knowing my parents were returning the following weekend, Mother McGee suggested that because it had helped D . . . [name of sister] the night before when I was there, it might help again if I stayed for the week, which horrified my mother, leaving a little one aged four but she could see how upset D . . . was, so I stayed that week. I'm told that from then on I refused to go home, I just loved it so much. Dreadful isn't it!

In contrast to Emily who used irony to show her resistance to being sent away from home, Marie used it to show her alignment with boarding school and the religious. There were a number of factors which Marie believed added to her enjoyment of the experience. First, the fact that there was only a small number of children in the school in the first year which, in Marie's opinion, led to a 'favourable ratio of children to nuns' and which allowed the religious to reflect the name of 'mother': 'They

²⁰ M.M. 18 April 1996. Interview one. All further quotes which relate to Marie are taken from this interview.

²¹ In 1944, over half (54.5%) of the students came from Sydney. See Appendix IX.

really did mother us. You can imagine a four year old really did need mothering.' The School Register reveals that forty-four students were enrolled in 1944 but Marie, in her interview, stated that there were twenty-eight. It may be argued that this contradiction, that is her memory of twenty-eight students, supports her belief that the school was very small and that they received individual attention. As discussed in chapter three, there is some credence to the view that the smaller numbers in the first three years or so did allow more intimacy which approximated home life. In 1944, before the larger dormitory was completed in 1947,²² the children slept in small bedrooms in groups of about three or four. As Marie recalled, this allowed greater freedom so that they could talk to each other when the nuns were supervising in other rooms. Marie remembered the enjoyment she found in this opportunity to get to know other children.

A second factor which Marie believed contributed to her enjoyment of the experience, which was quite different from the experience of other children including Michelle who was only just five when she arrived, was that because Marie was only four she was given special treatment in being cared for outside the normal classroom routine. For example, she went to bed earlier than the other children and would be cared for individually by one of the choir nuns who would read her a bedtime story, 'sing me a song and all the things, I guess, my mother did at home'. Often she would sit on the lap of the person who undertook this duty - a physical closeness between student and religious which no other ex-student reported. During the day, Marie spent some of her time in the infants classroom but often one of the coadjutrix sisters would take her with her while she went about her duties.

MM: When Sister Fitzgerald was known to be down in the dairy, she'd come and get me and down I'd go with her. Or when Sister Burke was . . . in the kitchen doing the preparation for dinner, the midday meal, I would be sitting up on the bench with her while

²² Kerever Park, House journal, September 1947.

she was boning the lamb to get a set of jacks out of it or whatever. That's why, I think, it wasn't the regimented, structured sort of place that you imagine a junior school would normally be where there'd be larger numbers and there would have to be more regimentation then, wouldn't there?

Yet while Marie considered the school as being non-regimented, there was little indication that special exemptions were made for any other students. In contrast, others who were there in this period, including the two religious Elly and Dianne, as well as Emily and Michelle, do recall the school as following a strict routine. Unlike these ex-students, Elly found this strictness to her liking, and believed that it had all been arranged to suit her.

A third factor which contributed to Marie's enjoyment of the school was the weekly visits of her parents. On the weekends, her parents would drive down on Saturday, take the girls out in the afternoon, stay overnight nearby and take them out again on Sunday. These visits were often at considerable personal cost to the parents who, due to petrol rationing, had to buy a coke burner for the car and endure the difficult drive over the mountains. When they were forced to miss a weekend, a reason was given to the children. Marie reflected that this resulted in her never feeling that she 'was sent there to be got out of the way', whereas she knew that there was another child who did have this belief. Regular weekly visits from parents were rare in the school setting and as Marie indicated, there were other children, including two interviewed for this research, who did feel that they had been, to some degree, sent there to get them out of the way.

Even when Marie broke the rules, she was treated in a way which seemed to differ from that of other children, such as when she and her sister decided to run away. The impetus for this came, according to Marie, from reading adventure books which made running away seem very exciting. However, Marie and her sister were discovered even before they left the school, although she believed the authorities thought that they were

simply planning an 'evening adventure stroll'. The response of the mistress general, Lillian McGee, was interpreted by Marie as one of concern:

MM: She [Lillian McGee] said to us, it's quite dangerous for you girls to go off there at night. I can see that it would seem very exciting but if you want to do it again just come and ask me and I'll take you. I can't tell you the impact of that discipline on us, the reason being that what obviously was behind it was her love and concern for us. And that's why I say that nearly all the discipline that was handed out there had love as its basis and we never talked about running away again. We didn't want to run away because we were unhappy, it was just this sense of adventure.

Perhaps it was the lack of resistance in Marie which led to such acceptance on the part of the mistress general. Certainly this was not the case for other students, discussed later in this chapter, especially those who sought to resist. Even Marie was aware that the breaking of rules was not always treated with understanding. She remembered the treatment of two sisters who refused to eat all their food. The sisters would have their food taken into the study room and be made to stand there, in public view, until they had eaten it. Marie recalled her judgement of the way in which the sisters were treated: 'Even then, as little children, we knew that was a dreadful thing to do.' Her explanation of this behaviour, rather than questioning the hegemonic practices of the school, was to argue that the particular religious involved was 'unbalanced' and that Lillian McGee would not have tolerated this behaviour if she had known. She also avoided any direct challenge to the practices there when she admitted that not all children were happy there. In this instance, her explanation is embedded in a discourse of individual differences: 'It's like ever so many things, that what is right for one is not necessarily right for another.'

The same religious who punished the sisters also punished Marie and others, including Elly who remembered receiving a similar punishment, by making them stand in the rubbish bin in the corner of the room. This seemed to have little impact on Marie, especially as it happened to others

and when she compared it to the treatment of the resistant sisters. In this case, she rejected any use of Freudian psychology to find meaning in this experience.

MM: People today would probably consider that humiliating and they'd come up with all sorts of reasons why that would affect a child's psyche but it didn't affect any of us in any way at all. I'm not saying that I'd recommend it. Children are very astute, aren't they, they tune in very well to how others react to things. These little . . . [name of the sisters] children must have had a dreadful time and we were all aware of that and that's why I know that for being stood in this little rubbish bin, we were affected by that.

Marie's ability to tolerate her punishment may have been related to its being common practice in that classroom. In contrast, what may have made the treatment of the sisters unacceptable was that it happened only to these two children. This was in keeping with Michelle's fear of being punished by being isolated from the other children either physically or emotionally.

Marie also recalled two experiences which gave her a sense of personal agency. Marie remembered being taught in 'Christian Doctrine' lessons 'that anyone could baptise you. It didn't have to be a priest'. So, when a non-Catholic girl in her dormitory confided that she 'felt different and that she would love to be the same', Marie promptly planned and executed a baptism. The impact of this experience stayed with Marie so that when recently given a chance to follow up the ex-student, who is now living overseas, Marie corresponded with her and commented: 'She is not a Catholic but she is a very devoted Anglican, she tells me. So I think I did a pretty good job with her baptism.' Marie also remembered learning the Latin responses to the Mass which led to another incident in which she experienced a sense of agency. During a holiday with her family, when the lack of an altar boy led to a last minute request from the priest for someone to help him serve mass, Marie, who knew by heart the Latin responses, immediately volunteered.

MM: The priest looked at me and beckoned me to come into the sacristy which I did and he said, you're not an altar boy. And I said, no. But I told him why we could do these things. But he must have been a bit of a good scout, this priest, because women couldn't be in the sanctuary during Mass but he told me I could be at the altar rails, obviously outside the sanctuary and do the Latin responses for him. So I did and from then on . . . he'd look for me.

When I asked her if she felt special as a result of this, Marie was at first unclear but then responded: 'Maybe I did because I've got such a clear memory of it.' As an adult, Marie still contributes to the Church but now as a minister of the Eucharist who takes communion to those who are too ill to attend Mass.

Other experiences, such as winning the prize each year for handwriting, which she remembered as being highly valued, and for darning also led to a sense of agency. Marie remembered that there was a great deal of emphasis on 'handwork' such as embroidery, sewing and knitting - a skill she still values highly. She also remembered a number of lessons in which the emphasis was on memorisation, such as memorising the names of the kings and queens and the dates of various battles, learning the capitals of various countries and the characteristics of various climatic zones, and sections of the gospels. In English, she remembered the strong emphasis on grammar, especially on parsing and analysis, so that even today she stated, she 'mentally correct[s] people for incorrect grammar'. Recollections of the emphasis placed on memorisation was the only place in her interview, apart from her recollection of the treatment of the sisters, where Marie questioned the hegemonic practices of the school. In questioning these practices, she, as with Emily, turned to the discourse of progress in order to provide an understanding of them: 'Memorising the details didn't appeal to me much and there was a lot of that in those days.' In another part of her narrative, she was more specific in drawing upon this discourse: 'I know that [memorising the names and dates of the kings and queens of England] was pretty dreadful but that seemed to be important, I suppose, in all junior schools in those days.' In this widening

of her questioning of such practices, she placed Kerever Park within the realm of all schools in that period, hence avoiding any direct challenging of it.

Marie also considered reading to have been given particular emphasis, although the main books she recalled were what she called 'girl adventure' stories. However, one individual book she did remember was an Aboriginal folk lore story her father bought her called *The Way of the Whirlwind*. The story was about two children and a mythical 'whirlwind character which these little children followed from place to place and the adventures they met along the way'.

MM: I think I loved the mythical figure of this whirlwind and I loved the two little characters in it which were both Aboriginal and I've had a real yen to want to get close to the Aboriginal folk lore. I've never achieved it, although I belong to a group called Black Women's Action for Education Foundation.

On listening to Marie's description of the story, I shared with her that I was reminded of how she came to be at Kerever Park with her sister, almost by accident, and where she too had a number of adventures along the way. Marie rejected what she referred to as my Freudian interpretation and this rejection was in keeping with her earlier rejection of the impact which being punished by having to stand in the garbage bin might have had on her: 'People today would probably consider that humiliating and they'd come up with all sorts of reasons why that would affect a child's psyche.' In contrast to drawing on Freudian discourses to interpret her experience, which may have led her to question the practices of the school, she turned to a discourse of idyllic childhood described so well in the school journal articles discussed in chapter three. She summarised her experience there as 'carefree, we didn't have a care in the world'.

Throughout her interview, Marie constructed herself as a loved child who was cared for by the good mother. For example, she discussed how,

when she expressed an interest in knitting, a religious gathered some sticks from the fields, whittled the ends to make them smooth and proceeded to teach her to knit. When Marie broke the sticks, the religious would go through the whole process again: 'Things like that mothers do for their children where they don't count the cost.' Her happiness at the school and her sense of being valued gave her a positive attitude towards the image of the Sacred Heart which she emphasised is still with her today.

MM: I don't think there was an inner cognitive interpretation of the Sacred Heart. I think it was an inner absorption by osmosis. It was just something that was atmospheric. We were in this atmosphere where love was all important and I don't know that we, certainly we didn't in any way analyse that. The effect on us then, as now, was very real, was and is real.

Marie's description of the influence of the school is reminiscent of O'Leary's description of the influence of convent education which draws upon a discourse of idyllic childhood in a convent setting.

And here we come to one of the most potent influences of the education given to Catholic children within a monastery or a convent, namely the fact that the school to which they belong is never the be-all and end-all of the men and women who bring them up. The children, loved and tended with unselfish care, know that they are but a part of the great life which sweeps around them, and that consciousness is a more lasting influence than would be the most perfectly developed pedagogical method.²³

Marie had no memories of being unhappy or of any real difficulties at the school. She enjoyed playing cricket and being in the fields with her friends, gathering blackberries, as did Emily, and the pleasure of having her own horse. She wasn't homesick at all and enjoyed going back to school. She didn't consider that she was a particularly good child, rather a 'bit of a scallywag', who still managed to get a number of pink ribbons at Weekly Exemptions. Like Elly who was also at the school in this period,

²³ Mary O'Leary, *Education with a tradition: an account of the educational work of the Society of the Sacred Heart*, London, University of London Press, 1936, p. 10.

Marie was happy and successful there and she too formed a strong bond with Lillian McGee whom she also 'very dearly loved'. In such references, she constructed the mistress general as the 'good mother'. Marie visited her often until her death and, when the school closed down, she continued to maintain her contact with the community there, often taking groups associated with her work to visit the school: 'It gives me pleasure to be able to introduce them to a place that I have such strong memories of.'

Francis

Francis arrived at Kerever Park in 1950, some years after the first period of establishment. Francis's mother had attended Rose Bay where she was head of the school, so it was intended that Francis go to Rose Bay for secondary school. The decision to send her to board earlier came from her parents' dissatisfaction with the local Catholic school in rural New South Wales where her father was a solicitor. The classes in the local school were large, the children received the cane and the fear of punishment and hell was emphasised in religion lessons, and so the decision was made to send Francis and her younger brother to boarding school. She was ten years old and her first memory was 'getting on the train at Central Station' and, as with other ex-students interviewed, not knowing what she 'was in for'.

FT: When I left the station, I suppose it was fine but, when I got there and realised that this is where I am going to be, I think it was a shock. I was very homesick. I think my parents came the first weekend and I didn't want them to leave for I wanted to leave with them, I remember. So I think I spent the first month just about in tears but Mother McGee was the one who got me through so that I think by the end of the first term I was alright.²⁴

²⁴ F.T. 4 December 1996. Interview one. All further quotes which relate to Francis are taken from this interview.

Francis remembered a number of experiences in these early days which helped her to adjust including the 'motherly' nature of Lillian McGee.

FT: Oh I think she [Lillian McGee] talked to me and they tucked me in at night. You had your dolls to cuddle and all the living of the life was fine once I made friends. I actually made a friend I still have. We actually went together on the train. We are still friends forty years later, so it's incredible.

Yet it was not only the attention from the religious and the capacity to make friends which helped Francis to adjust. An experience in her early time there contributed to her sense of agency and included public recognition.

FT: The first holidays I got the measles and I had to go back late which was a bit of a disaster having just started. I know there was something we had to do in the holidays. Something we had to learn and I must have done it in bed when I was sick because when I came back I knew it. I can remember them saying: Isn't this wonderful, she's been away and she's done this. And it made me feel so much better and I think I just took off from there.

Francis commented that, unlike a lot of people who complained about the discipline, she 'was able to live that sort of life'. She described this life as being 'regimented' and 'timetabled' and demanding perfection. She attributed her ability to cope with the discipline as coming both from her personality and from her parents, especially her father who expected to be obeyed without question.

Key phrases which ran throughout her interview included an emphasis on 'doing'. For example: 'Being there and doing homework.' 'I didn't seem to have a problem doing it.' 'We kept sort of doing things.' 'I went to Mass and did what I did and went to religion class and I took it in.' She too remembered the sisters who were made to stand in the study room until they ate their food and her thought at the time as being: 'Why don't they just eat it and be done with it?' In fact, 'food' was the only area which Francis seemed to reveal any resistance and which she remembers as the strictest rule.

FT: I suppose I was a bit anti the fact that you had to eat everything on the plate. Even your parents said you have to have everything that is on your plate but if you left something you didn't get into trouble. That was the strictest thing that I remember, the fact that you couldn't leave anything on your plate.

Like Michelle, Francis too seemed to recognise that obeying the rules and looking for reward in achieving within the system was the way to 'live that sort of life'. What seemed to assist her in achieving this was the close fit between the discipline of her home and the discipline of the school, as well as her enjoyment of the activities they were set there. Francis has kept all the 'feast books' she completed while at the school. In the interview, she glanced through one of the books and found an exercise in which she was asked to identify 'Our Lady's favourite word'. Her written response, which she says was her own, reflected the discourse of conformity to those in authority and the positive outcomes for the community of such obedience.

FT: Throughout the gospel we find only seven of Our Lady's words quoted. The one that appeals to me the most is that spoken at the Wedding Feast at Cana when Our Lady said to the servants 'Do whatever He tells you.' We can apply these five words to our everyday life by perfect obedience. They seem very simple words but with deep thought they mean a lot. When Our Lady spoke these words to the servants they would naturally have been rather puzzled but they obeyed her and through their obedience Our Lord performed His first miracle which gave pleasure to all around. So if we are perfectly obedient in small ways what Our Lord does to one, He does to all.²⁵

Francis's willingness to be obedient, her enjoyment of undertaking regulated tasks (such as completing feast books) and her achievement at the school ensured a happy relationship with those in authority. She received a number of pink ribbons, was always in the school choir and came first in the class in the second year she was there. In reflecting back, she noted: 'I was obviously happy because I did well there.'

²⁵ Francis T, Feast book, unpublished material, 1952, held by Francis T. See Figures 10 and 11.

Her emphasis on doing and on achieving was also reflected in her memory of what they were taught in religion classes: 'You get out and do your own thing and you work hard to get what you deserve. That you don't expect, no one else owes you a living. And I think my religion has had a lot to do to make me feel that you should stand on your own feet.' She remember watching the film *Red Shoes* while at the school and her words illustrate her sense of being busy with living and achieving in her daily life: 'I just remember the dancing and the little red shoes: Going. Going. Going.' She also remembered and recited lines from her favourite hymn which also reflected a theme of action:

FT: When the battle rages fiercest round the standard of our king.
Let us press unto him, louder clearer let us sing. Jesus be our king
and leader, grant us in our toils thy heart. Are we not they chosen
soldiers? Children of the Sacred Heart.

Her explanation for her enjoyment of the hymn was that she liked 'stirring' and 'triumphant' songs. She particularly remembered feast days when they played what she called Legionaries which again illustrated this theme of action: 'I see it more like the horses that used to come in with the lances on it . . . like the horses that come in lines in the big paddocks . . . It was sort of running. That's all very vague but I can see the days and being out there and doing these things.' In another place, she returned again to this game: 'You carried your banner and you were against one another.' Yet not all her memories of the books she liked reflected total alignment with the dominant social order. She particularly enjoyed *Anne of Green Gables*: 'I think it was just she had a freedom and she was, she didn't ever seem to be going to school and she was with aunt and uncle who just seemed to be on this farm.' She also recalled that the heroine of the story engaged in what may be considered to be resistant behaviour - she dyed her hair green. Her memory of this book also led to her recollection of being 'envious' of the girls who lived 'a good life' on the land, hence in this instance positioning herself as outsider - an experience which she shared with Gabrielle, another ex-student interviewed, who

attended the school in the late 1950s. In adulthood, she was finally able to pursue this interest when she and her husband 'went on the land'.

Unlike Michelle, she found the religious approachable to talk to about her work or about whether or not she was happy, although she had no memories of actually doing so. Rather, it was a belief that, if there had been a need, she would have done so. She did remember taking a girl, who had just started to menstruate and who didn't understand what was happening to her, to a religious 'to have it all explained'. Her capacity to undertake such an initiative seemed to have given her a sense of agency. However, she continued to find leaving home difficult and cried on the train but commented that this wasn't as 'traumatic as the first time'. She has maintained her friendship with a girl who travelled on the same train with her from her first days there into the present.

Like Marie, Francis offered little active resistance to the social order of the school and within the interview she described herself as 'a loyal old girl'. This construction illustrated her continued identification with two of the central educational discourses of the school, namely striving for perfection and conformity to those in authority.

FT: You had to be pretty perfect. You couldn't be slap dash. I mean if your margin was crooked you did it again. You didn't make a mess of your books and if you did you did it again and if you made a spelling mistake you did it again [emphasis on 'again']. Today you say, that's not good enough. You must write that page again and they say, who cares! So the whole attitude had changed. We wouldn't have been game enough to say who cares. We wouldn't have known the expression. So that doesn't worry me that it was strict like that where some people mightn't have liked that.

She also commented that she believes 'in free enterprise': 'You get out and do your own thing and you work hard to get what you deserve.' In such references, she turned to a political discourse in which workers conform to what is expected of them, work hard at those expectations and are rewarded for their endeavours.

Judith

By the time Judith came to the school in 1956, the school population was over fifty. The horse riding lessons had ceased, as well as the freedom of children to have their own horse there. Extra land had been purchased at the back of the school so that the children were now required to play in the back field rather than in the front and more public area of the formal gardens. Two new dormitories had been built, so that most children slept in large dormitories and generally the physical structure of the school had taken on a more institutional character. One initiative which was brought into the school in this period was permission for the children to change out of their uniforms into play clothes for the afternoon recreation. Perhaps this was designed to provide a more homelike setting as when the children were able to do some horse-riding and have their own horses.

Judith came to Kerever Park when she was almost seven. She was from the country where she lived on a large grazing property some distance from town and had never been to school. Her mother did not want her to attend the local school for fear that she 'wouldn't meet the nicest children there'.²⁶ She believes she was sent to boarding school because her mother did not want to teach correspondence and because she was not 'the mothering kind of mother'. Judith looked forward to going to school but her first contact established a resistance, in this case based on the discourse of religious as mother, which she maintained throughout her seven years there.

JH: I remember the day I went to school very clearly. My sister had been born that night in hospital and I wanted to go and see her but we couldn't go because we had to go to the train. So Dad took me to the train and when we got to the train, as I said before I was looking forward to going to school, and there was this very nice nun, Mother McGee. How do you do Mr . . . ? Then I looked up the train station and all these girls were crying and . . . [name of

²⁶ J.H. 1 June 1996. Interview one. All further quotes which relate to Judith are taken from this interview.

student she knew from home] who was with me was crying. She was four or five years older than I was. She cried very softly and there was L. . . throwing a tantrum on the platform with her legs up in the air screaming and shrieking. There was a lot of crying and I was very amazed by that. When we got in the train - do you remember the clickers they had? - Mother McGee and another nun just went up and down the train, click, click click, get in your seats, be quiet, say the rosary and I thought, Who do you think you are, you are not going to tell me what to do. That's the day I went to school. I still remember thinking You're not my mother. I remember Mother McGee saying, Hello Judith. I'm Mother McGee. And my immediate reaction was, You're not my mother. I am not going to call you mother. So I must have been like that very much already before I went to school.

In describing her life at home, she brought into play the discourse of idyllic childhood. Judith and her younger brother lived a very free life and, during the school holidays, her two older sisters would return from Rose Bay school and take them on outings. She had no memory of ever being criticised before she attended school and the only rule she remembered her mother imposing was that the children play outside. While Judith attributed her resistance to her own personality and to the freedom she experienced before attending school, she also questioned the capacity of the school to meet her needs.

While Judith had never attempted to read a book before she attended school, her father had read 'long chapters from long books' to her. At school, she learnt to read extremely quickly and soon developed a passion for it. Yet apart from her interest in books, she remembered being 'very, very bored' and 'not challenged in any way to think'. Her boredom was sporadically alleviated when she moved out of the infants classes, where they did handwriting and 'rote learning' such as tables 'ad nauseam', into the primary area where they did some projects and grammar, Judith excelling in the latter activity. However, in spite of her apparent brightness, her failure to conform to the school regime led to a number of punishments which began early in her time there:

JH: My first punishment that I remember was having to wear my dressing gown to class. That was because I was late in the mornings. I hated getting up early. I had to make my bed and get ready to go to mass and I didn't like all that morning routine, so my punishment was that I had to wear my dressing gown all day and stay down the back of the class with my pyjamas underneath.

As a child, Judith understood that this punishment was intended to make her 'look foolish' and her response was to 'resent' it. She quickly developed a strategy to cope with these assaults. A label assigned to her, included in the following extract, indicates the construction of individuals who were resistant to the prevailing discourse of obedience and conformity to those in authority.

JH: I just blamed the other person and thought I was alright. I had no intentions of changing any of my behaviour whatsoever. And that was when I was seven! So very early on I was very negative, well not negative, contemptuous of authority. That was the name that was given to me ten years later and that came to me very early.

Other punishments followed and one which she particularly remembered echoes the punishment administered to the two sisters who refused to eat all their food - punishment which isolated and humiliated those who would not conform.

JH: The thing that I have got resentment for was I had a very untidy desk, so the punishment for that was to have a cardboard box and all the contents of my desk were put into the box for everybody to walk past when we went in ranks to the dining room. We used to have to make ranks up and down the study room and everyone would file past my desk.

Judith continued her resistance, including running away from the school, and the punishments continued. These punishments included being excluded from special activities such as putting on a puppet show, not being allowed to read novels or to undertake any responsibilities, and not being allowed to have outings on Sundays with the parents of her friends.

Her parents visited rarely, except for Parents' Day which occurred once a year, although her father did come to the school to express his anger to her when she attempted to run away - a response from him she had not expected. There was also one other unexpected visit when her older sister was killed.

JH: When S . . . was killed, they [the religious] came and said to the school that we had to pray for a special intention. So I said to Mother . . . , what is that special intention? She looked at me really strangely because S . . . had been killed. She said, well I think you should pray especially hard for that special intention but I can't tell you what it is. That is interesting. I can still remember the look on her face when I asked her.

As her parents did not want her to attend the funeral, Judith was not told of her sister's death until a week later when her parents came. They took her out, she spent one night with them, was returned the next day and life went on 'as if nothing had happened'. Judith could not understand what had happened to her sister and 'used to lie in bed at night and think she is in America . . . I just didn't know what dead was'. As with Emily and the polio epidemic, and Catherine, whose mother died in difficult circumstances while she was a religious at the school, no real discussion took place about such traumatic life events. Both children and religious were expected to continue their lives as normal.

In spite of the punishments administered to her, Judith thought that the mistress general, Lillian McGee, tried to be 'fair and warm' and she also remembered some of the religious reaching out to her. For example, Mother . . . who 'tried to talk' to her and an American nun who knew that she liked books and encouraged her in that area, but these attempts did not bring about any real change in her behaviour or how she was perceived within the school. Like Michelle, books provided escape: 'I read avidly, day and night. All that time I was in a fantasy world.' Escape also came in the form of imaginative games she played with her friends.

Books also provided her with a discourse, 'finding something to be glad about', which helped her to cope with her difficult life,

JH: I would say that *Pollyanna*, being glad, was a great influence on my insight . . . She had a way of turning adversity to her benefit. I would say that she would be the most influential person now that I think about religion because that was the way that I saw myself. As being very misunderstood. I would make the most of everything, no matter how hard they tried to make it for me. I would make it good for myself inside . . . Just simply that thing about you can always be glad about something. It cannot be as terrible. You can turn it. I don't know. It was just my attitude. You are not going to get the better of me or whatever, would make me feel that I had not been annihilated.

She also remembered reading stories of the lives of Christian martyrs. No doubt the intended goal for such literature on the part of the school was to encourage the children to be faithful to the beliefs of the Church. However, Judith took up the discourse of 'suffering for your beliefs' and used it to provide meaning for her resistance. Her identification with a discourse of martyrdom - being true to your principles, even in the face of death - also allows insight into her positioning as one who, in Chanfrault-Duchet's model, seeks 'authentic values' in a 'degraded world'.²⁷

JH: I think the whole of the martyrdom thing would be one of the most significant sections of the Christianity that came to me, because if you really believe in your principles then you have to be prepared to suffer and so that way is a rationalization of all the suffering that I had too. The wanting to retain my honesty in myself. That I would have to be treated like that because that was what the martyrs had. When you think of it, the thing for me was the martyrs - that you have to live by your principles no matter what the circumstances. And that would have been very much reinforced.

Judith remembered that, from quite early in her experience there, she believed that she was fighting for her principles - principles which reflect

²⁷ Chanfrault-Duchet, p. 80.

her positioning in relation to the dominant ideology of obedience and conformity to those in authority. In this reference, Judith brings into play a discourse of individual rights and freedom.

JH: That I could do what I liked with my life. That I wasn't going to be told what to do and that I was a good person. I wasn't wicked. That I believed in standing up for my friends. That I basically had the right to make my own choices in life.

Looking back, Judith questioned her resistant positioning, as well as the discourse of obedience and conformity to those in authority. The following extract illustrates a tension which existed at various times within her interview, between questioning the practices of the school and questioning her own resistant position. It is as though she oscillated between constructing herself as one who is 'contemptuous of authority' (the title, quoted previously, she was later given at Rose Bay) and constructing herself as 'a difficult child' who needed special treatment.

JH: I reckoned the harder they said I was not, the harder I barricaded in and said I am. I think that it's unfortunate that those self preservation things that I used, I don't think they've done me any good at all. I think it would have been much better to resolve that, than to have that barricade there. It would have been great. I think it was just one fits all. Mother McGee maybe tried very hard to understand each child, but I think it was very much they wanted the children to turn out in this way.

There was also a section in her interview which suggested that, as a child, she also wanted resolution of her dilemma. Judith remembered enjoying reading Greek myths and legends, particularly one about Belepher, 'the man who tamed the flying horse'. When I questioned her about what she liked about it, she responded emphatically: 'The point was that he tamed the horse!' But no one 'tamed' Judith either at Kerever Park or at Rose Bay from which she was later expelled. As a child, she recognised that there was a desire to make her conform to the expectations of the school. She resisted this pressure and in her interview offered a suggestion as to how such a 'difficult' child might have been handled: 'If they had given

me lots of responsibility and given me challenging and hard things to do, they would have had a lot less trouble.' The pervasive tone of the interview with Judith was one of regret - regret that she was so resistant and regret that those in authority at Kerever Park did not seek alternatives for dealing with her resistance. As a child, she openly challenged the hegemonic practices of the school, hence adopting a belief that change is possible and is brought about by the actions of individuals. It is perhaps this belief which led her, as an adult, to establish an alternative school for children who do not fit into the mainstream system - a place where the 'difficult child' would be given freedom and acceptance while still being challenged educationally. This action may also have contributed to her current position, one of a degree of acceptance of her school experience and of alignment with teachers. Her words indicate that this position has been achieved through a long process of struggling for meaning in the experience. As with other ex-students, she referred obliquely to a discourse of Freudian psychology - the impact of early experiences on later life.

JH: I suppose it's very easy to blame. To think that I've been unhappy in my life because I was sent away so young to school. I do think that is true but I've got to live my own life now. I can't live back in that time. I've got over it. I've got over my school experience.

Gabrielle

Gabrielle was in the same class as Judith, arriving at the school in 1957 at age seven. She was the youngest of a family of eight children, some of whom were adults and had left home and married while she was at Kerever Park. Others were still at Rose Bay or at the Jesuit secondary school, St Ignatius College Riverview. The Sacred Heart order together with its schools was chosen because Gabrielle's mother had cousins who were in the order. She had already spent a year at boarding school in a country convent, having been placed there because her father was ill in

hospital and her mother having had a 'nervous breakdown'.²⁸ She remembered this early experience as being 'traumatic', both because she was not aware of being told that she was going to be left there and because of the conditions at this first school. For example, when other children did homework, she, probably because she was younger, was required to 'sit with a huge tub of water' in which photographic negatives had been soaked. Her job was to scrape the jellied silver nitrate off the back of the negatives which would later be used for making holy pictures.²⁹

As with other students, her early experiences at Kerever Park were central in her memory and her earliest memory echoes the shock which Emily also received in her first days there. In this case, Gabrielle remembered standing in a line on the concrete and noticing that the cross of the religious in charge (the religious all wore large crosses around their necks) had 'flipped up on her shoulder'. Gabrielle left the line, approached the religious and 'very carefully picked up her cross and placed it centre again'. The religious in question 'drew herself up . . . and said, [use of loud voice] Get back into place. Do not touch me. I am Christ's bride and no one touches a . . .'.³⁰ Gabrielle did not finish this sentence but rather moved into expressing her shock. In her reference to her good intentions and being misunderstood, she, like Judith, seems to be referring to a construction of herself as a misunderstood child.

GD: I couldn't believe it . . . I didn't ever touch a nun after that. One didn't touch them. Even looking at them was sort of, you know. So that was my first thing, with very good intentions. I just tried to make her perfectly neat and sort of help her out with something she hadn't noticed and boy did I get it.³¹

This gap between Gabrielle's desires which came from 'good intentions' and the negative response of those in authority continued. For example,

28 G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview one.

29 *ibid.*

30 *ibid.*

31 *ibid.*

she remembered herself as one who 'hungered to learn' but this hunger was never really satisfied. It was Gabrielle who remembered (as discussed previously in chapter three in the incident about darning) the ability of the infants teacher to motivate the children by promising them that she was going to teach them something interesting and then letting them down: 'So every class she would get you to the brink, preparation for learning went on so long . . . it was an art form. She could have taught anyone anything, I think, except she didn't.' She also remembered approaching the mistress general with hopes that she would be admitted into the Congregation of the Holy Child and being asked: 'Did I know what I was like?' She was then told that she was 'flippant'. Her desire to join the congregation came from her desire for 'recognition', 'status' and to be considered to 'be good', but she was never to attain a sense of agency through her actions and public recognition: 'Good meant I never quite met it.'³² Perhaps this practice of encouraging the children to strive for perfection was intended to produce the self-monitoring individual, as Foucault suggests, but in this case one who constantly strives for a higher level of production.

Key words and phrases which surfaced throughout Gabrielle's narratives included 'survival', 'dangerous' and 'power struggle', and these were not unrelated in her memory of the school experience. For example, she referred to the experience as having 'danger in it and it was a matter of surviving'.³³ Dianne, who was so extremely homesick, also referred to surviving but for her it meant 'being strong' and trying to hide her pain. However, Gabrielle's meaning was different and revealed her awareness of power relations: 'Surviving in a boarding school. Oh well, just surviving, running with the pack, making sure you weren't victimised. Hiding what had to be hidden so it couldn't be seen. There is power struggle in it.'³⁴ What had to be hidden was anything which made her

³² *ibid.*

³³ G.D. 31 August 1996. Interview two.

³⁴ G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview one.

vulnerable: the fact that she came from a background which was much poorer than many of the other students; a mother who was much older than the mothers of the other children and her father who 'was different ... very powerful'.³⁵ Gabrielle's awareness of power relations seemed to have been developed within her family life. Her mother was a Catholic and her father a convert, although he 'really despised all Catholics' and considered them to be 'brainwashed' and 'unfortunate Irish people'. She described her mother as 'a real nineteen forties, good, traditional, loyal, loving Catholic' who was 'fixed' in her beliefs from which she would not deviate.³⁶ Such positioning was perhaps the outcome or the cause of what Gabrielle termed the 'marital stress' in their relationship. In particular, Gabrielle remembered the threat of violence from her father.

GD: I've seen him [my father] jump on a few sheep and kill them and I've just looked at those sheep and thought well, how is he to know it's me that he is going to do that to. He just needs to be angry at any stage so I used to expect him to throw stones at the dogs and perhaps throw stones at me. It never occurred to me that he would control himself. To my knowledge I don't know that he ever hit me in his life but I always knew that he could and if he did, it would be devastating and I knew that he had been absolutely frightening to the older children. He had laid a stock whip around the older children and I was very lucky to be the eighth kid. So I think I was sent away to protect, so what was a trauma for me was probably quite an unselfish activity.³⁷

Her mother had a number of breakdowns especially after the birth of some of the children. When Gabrielle was young, her mother went to South America to recuperate from one of these breakdowns.³⁸

Gabrielle's awareness of power relations and violence led her to recognise it in the school community, especially among the religious.

35 *ibid.*

36 *ibid.*

37 *ibid.*

38 G.D. 31 August 1996. Interview two.

GD: Mother . . . stood up on a chair to wind this clock and it just happened to be over a slow combustion heater that had to be filled with wood and she burnt her apron. Well, she burst into tears and we knew that she was a young nun and that she had burnt her apron and it was going to cause problems. Then she had to wear this patched apron. It had caused her problems and we knew that there was some sort of power struggle or some sort of system that went above us and no one, except, you know, the really strong ones or who were invulnerable, now that might have been a total mis-reading, she just might just have been upset or disappointed or whatever, but we read her tears as fear. We just saw her as very much under the thumb of these older nuns. Whereas Mother Boydell who did the garden, wore boots, lived a life of her own.³⁹

Gabrielle also knew which religious 'could be a winner' if she took on another religious and she was aware of the class system of the choir nuns and the coadjutrix sisters 'who did the menial work'.⁴⁰

The system of hierarchical power relations was also extended to the children. Gabrielle identified the children who bullied and one experience she related indicated her participation in it.

GD: Certain girls had to go through and check that certain girls had put their things to the wash. Well, that was a power game. If you got to do that you stayed up a bit later and you went out to the corridor and you checked and you read every name on every pair of underpants and then you could inspect them for what the poor kid could and couldn't do. And I remember sitting with a kid and saying, We've got her! Scrapings of poo or whatever. And I don't remember whether we did it or not, I'm sure we did, or whether it was enough just to know that you had a lever to whip the poor kid. We could inspect all the pants and then... I guess people knew that if you just whispered together that you had all this information, so that was cruel wasn't it?⁴¹

Gabrielle coped at the school by constantly being 'very careful and very guarded' about allowing any weakness and vulnerability to be seen. She remembered being fascinated by one child who would say nice things to

³⁹ G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview one.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*

her and if she liked someone she would tell them: 'I can remember looking at . . . with fascination and think[ing] I would no more say something nice to someone. Isn't that fascinating! So I was repressed.'⁴²

She was aware of status which came from class - the wealth of others and her own poorer background.

GD: If you were really really really sophisticated, a David Jones cake for your birthday would arrive in a David Jones parcel. That was very approved of you know, one . . . that was what one did. That was the aristocracy you know had David Jones cakes. Oh [gasp] the icing on those cakes. They were sponge cakes, they had jam, mock cream and this was, they would arrive in the mail and all the candles had been put on of course. My parents, the best my poor mother could do was to send bloomers with peppermint life-savers. That was sort of her mentality as opposed to other kids' whose parents who would send them a David Jones birthday cake and mixed cakes from the delicatessen section of David Jones. I mean a David Jones delicatessen can bring tears to my eyes now. [laughs] Not really, no. I just used to think, fancy to think that it meant something you know.⁴³

She was the only ex-student interviewed who made any reference to ethnicity. She recalled a girl, who lived locally in Bowral, attending the school for a short period. Her response illustrates the influx of European immigrants in the post World War Two period and the construction of them as alien, by those who belonged to the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture: 'We made her life a misery. You could smell garlic on her. She smelt European . . . it was the first time I had ever come up against a new Australian.' The girl stayed at the school for a short period and then left.⁴⁴

In her later years at Kerever Park (she stayed there seven years until she was thirteen, completing the first year of high school there), she became aware of the less powerful position of women and religious and was 'suicidal' about becoming an adult woman. In her discussions on this

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

topic, she presented a tension between freedom and safety and referred to the position of women as powerless. For example, she remembered that boys from Chevalier College were allowed to swim in the nearby river - a freedom not given to Kerever Park students who were confined to certain areas within the school property except when their parents took them out. However, the freedom enjoyed by the Chevalier boys had its risks.

GD: We used to have Chevalier boys come down marching with their big boots and big band and used to come and parade around the gravel, around the rotunda and give a little demonstration of marching to us. That was more impressive than any feminine exhibition . . . I saw nuns and females as adjuncts to the powerful in the world and the significant people. Mind you none of our students went down to the river and swam in the river and drowned as did two Chevalier boys. They were allowed all this male freedom and so on but it also meant risks and danger and it was perhaps better to be female, submissive, passive and survivors.⁴⁵

Later, when summarising her experience of the school, she also reflected this tension between safety and freedom: 'Cocooned to me means safe but it also to me means imprisoned.' Her reflection extends the metaphor of the school as a 'moulding haven' used by another ex-student and discussed in chapter three, in that Gabrielle's understanding acknowledges the limitations of gender.⁴⁶

While Gabrielle privately resisted many of the practices there, she did not openly challenge them. When asked why, she commented that she 'watched the other questioners . . . I didn't ever challenge. I was too insecure and didn't want to be sent home. Just wanted to survive.'⁴⁷ (Her fear of being sent home came from a pragmatic understanding of the problems it would cause for her mother as her father was resistant to the children being sent to expensive Catholic schools.) Her summary reflected the discourse of obedience and conformity to those in authority: 'Think

⁴⁵ G.D. 31 August 1996. Interview two.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview one.

one thing but don't ever express what you think.'⁴⁸ Like Judith, she remembered reading stories about martyrs, but the meaning Gabrielle found in them differed from that of Judith who located in them a discourse of fighting for your principles. In contrast, Gabrielle viewed these stories as presenting 'emotional blackmail to never question' the teachings of the Church - unquestioning conformity to those in authority even if it led to death was preferable.⁴⁹ When she did resist the hegemonic practices as they related to women and expressed her concern about becoming a woman to a visiting priest, he responded: 'We just have to accept.'⁵⁰ The stories of the martyrs also provided her with a discourse which, as in the case of Judith, differed from that of love expressed as sacrifice and suffering. In the case of Gabrielle, suffering was a way of showing one's strength.

GD: Being a boarder fulfilled this martyr or survival. You can climb the Himalayas or you can bloody survive at boarding school. Each is equally lonely and a trial of sorts. So if you have the right kind of mentality that can romanticise the misery.'⁵¹

Her understanding of God was of a powerful and demanding God - one who accepts sacrifice and suffering in this world for happiness in the next - in contrast to a God who is benevolent and who offers safety. In one section of the interview, she remembered being driven from home to Sydney in the car by two of her older sisters, so that she could catch the train to Bowral. In the car, Gabrielle overheard her sisters discussing the likelihood that their mother, who was 'so sick and exhausted', would soon die.⁵² She returned to school and for the entire term expected to get a message saying that her mother was dead. In discussing this incident, Gabrielle tied it into her memory of being read pious stories from the Catholic magazine, *Ave Maria*. In particular, she remembered a story in

48 *ibid.*

49 *ibid.*

50 G.D. 31 August 1996. Interview two.

51 *ibid.*

52 *ibid.*

which a young consumptive boy lies dying while his mother is caught at sea in a ship. The mother returns only to have the child die in her arms. In her relating of the story, it is possible to hear echoed constructions of the early life of Madeleine Sophie, as discussed in chapter two, in which the discourse of suffering in childhood as being of ultimate benefit is stressed.

GD: In some way there was all that pain and sentimental trauma that was in the stories. It was quite easily reflected in my life or I suppose in quite a lot of kids' lives. Being separated from mother and being kept in ignorance. The opened letters. And you never, perhaps some parents wrote very frankly and honestly to their children, I don't know, but my letters were always about how the canaries were whistling and the weather. They were lovely letters and so on, but they weren't the personal outpourings that really filled you in with the psychological journey that parents were making at the time. So it was boarding school in isolation, physical and emotional as well . . . God never actually intervened in those stories. The poor miserable sick people usually did die because that was the best thing that could happen because of salvation and the after-life. There were no physical let-offs in the stories. So they were stories to do with the spirit and euphoria of having faith and having the faith to be saved because you were the perfect Christian, Catholic or whatever. And things turned out well in terms of salvation. So I never expected, God wasn't something that actually made positive moves.⁵³

Yet while Gabrielle did not personally believe in a God who intervened on the part of individuals such as sick children, and hence perhaps on her own behalf, she recalled the emphasis on prayer in the school. She referred to an incident in which the religious needed some old tiles to repair the roof (second hand tiles being sought as they would match the existing ones). None were to be found and the religious turned to God by putting one tile under the statue of St Joseph in the chapel and, together with the children, praying for a miracle. The tiles were located and a miracle was believed to have taken place.

⁵³ *ibid.*

GD: The efficacy of prayer overwhelmed everything. Stick a tile under the statue, pray and it happens. Prayer is ten times more valuable. God doesn't help those who help themselves. God helps those who pray or whatever. Prayer was heavily on the agenda.⁵⁴

This recollection is in keeping with the written reminiscences of Sister Evelyn Stewart who recalled that she and some of the other religious, including another coadjutrix sister, had placed religious medals in the back field they wished to acquire from their neighbour. When the neighbour came to the school to negotiate, they also placed a medal under the cushion of the chair on which it was believed he would sit. The outcome was favourable and, as well as the paddock, a tennis court and shed were included, although Evelyn Stewart also commented that 'some hard bargaining' took place.⁵⁵ This reliance on prayer denied the efficacy of human actions and the achievement of a sense of personal agency - successful outcomes came via the actions of God, not of individuals. However, there is in her reminiscences, as there is in Gabrielle's extract, a tension between believing that such outcomes were the work of God and that they were the work of individuals.

In spite of her resistance to the efficacy of prayer, Gabrielle was very attracted to the rituals associated with the religious practices. She loved the Latin Mass, 'the theatrics and the speaking in a language that isn't your own'.⁵⁶ She 'found fascinating' the vestments the priest wore and the actions he performed throughout the Mass. Yet in spite of being drawn to these religious rituals, she was also bored, possibly due to the length of such services, and remembered the pleasure she took, along with other children, in making mice out of handkerchiefs and pushing them along tunnels made out of hymn books.⁵⁷ Particularly in the area of religion, she remembered Lillian McGee being 'a fine communicator'

54 *ibid.*

55 Evelyn Stewart, *Reminiscences of KP for Sr L. McGee*, unpublished material, no date, Rose Bay archives, Sydney, p. 4.

56 G.D. 31 August 1996. Interview two.

57 *ibid.*

who provided them with an analysis of the various aspects of the Mass, which she still remembers, and taught them about complex concepts such as 'transubstantiation' in which it is understood that the Mass 'was Golgotha [the crucifixion of Jesus] all over again'.⁵⁸

She remained throughout her childhood tremendously homesick and found, as did the religious, consolation in the beauty of the garden: 'Only a kid starved of affection could pick up what lilac bushes are like when they are in blossom.'⁵⁹ In another section in which she again reflected on her homesickness and its continuance into adulthood, she brought into play the construction of the lost child:

GD: It [homesickness] was like grieving for a kid that dies or someone that dies. You just carry it around with you. It is just continual baggage that is exacerbated or not depending whether you come back from home or worried that your mother might die while you are back at school while you are in this isolation. Getting news from home. Getting a pair of pants and a packet of life-savers rolled up was this wonderful little touch of home and it is just constant loneliness. Only people who know about grieving for someone who is lost. . . .⁶⁰

Yet while she found consolation in the beauty of the environment, it also reflected her pain: 'This very mournful Mopoke sound was resonant of the homesickness' but it is 'still a beautiful sound. When I hear a Mopoke I think of that place. That lovely mournful minor note that belongs to Kerever Park.'⁶¹

As a child, she positioned herself as an outsider to those who came from a more privileged background. In her discussion about her current work as a teacher, she continued to position herself in this way while acknowledging that her education at Kerever Park and later at Rose Bay

58 *ibid.*

59 *ibid.*

60 *ibid.*

61 *ibid.*

provided her with behaviours which enable her to position herself competently within a range of social groups.

GD: I got an understanding of class . . . it made me a far more sophisticated human being and a good games player, too. So, it's been an advantage and you know I teach at this funny little backwater high school but I can take those kids into SCEGGS or another school and I can match the people who are there . . . I have what it takes. I've got that background that gives me the confidence to cope with a lot of these people which can be quite intimidating if you don't know the system so that was an advantage.⁶²

Jennifer

Jennifer was also a child from an isolated rural property. She began her interview by stating that it was 'expected' that she and her twin brother would be going to boarding school and they were 'resigned' to it.⁶³ Her older brother had been sent at the young age of six because they had lost their house in a fire and also the birth of twins (of which Jennifer was one) as well as there being another older child resulted in the four young children being 'too hard' for her mother 'to cope with' and to teach correspondence school as well. Kerever Park was chosen because her cousins were also at the school. When Jennifer arrived at age ten, her older sister, much to her regret, had already finished there and moved on to Rose Bay. In the preceding years, Jennifer had been taught correspondence school by her mother and she attributed her relatively easy adaptation to the strict demands of Kerever Park to the disciplined way in which her mother had taught them. Yet this did not overcome the experience of homesickness.

JE: I suppose initially I was excited. It all seemed very different and exciting. Very pretty down here. Green and lush and so different from where we had grown up which was kind of very barren. The plains . . . but I think probably it wore off very quickly in that I was

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ J.E. 18 November 1996. Interview one. All further quotes which relate to Jennifer are taken from this interview.

very homesick for Mum and Dad. Terribly homesick. Just to know that they were there.

What made being at boarding school even more difficult was that Jennifer still wet her bed and continued to do so until she was twelve. She remembered that she was afraid that she would get into trouble for it but she didn't and no one teased her. Gabrielle also remembered children who wet their beds and in one case she was given the responsibility, over the period of one term, of helping one such child remake her bed and change her clothes during the night.⁶⁴

Early in her interview, Jennifer constructed herself as a child as 'rebellious', 'argumentative' and 'a dare devil'. She considered that she adopted this behaviour in order to be noticed and respected by other children. It seems that it also provided her with a sense of agency. In relating an incident associated with this construction, she indicated how she positioned herself - as one who pushed at the limits of the rules (hence gaining status in the community of children) but who also avoided behaviour which would alienate her from those in authority. In this way, she seemed able to both align herself with the children and with those in authority. This contrasts with Francis who conformed to the expectations of those in authority, sought recognition from them and who explored resistance and freedom only in her imagination through reading such books as *Anne of Green Gables*.

JE: I used to miss my ponies most shockingly. And I used to sneak out behind Kerever Park and veer left and up, there was that lane way that went up near the tennis courts, and if you went to the left it was just farm land, I don't think it was Kerever Park's and we'd go, you'd usually get someone to go with me and there were two ponies in a paddock and I'd take a skipping rope and put it around their necks and get on them. We never got caught. I used to do things that probably just went a little bit too far. But um, it somehow kept me balanced. It must have kept me balanced. I thought I still want to be free and easy. Other than that I quite enjoyed the school work we did . . . I don't think a lot of other kids

⁶⁴ G.D. 9 July 1996. Interview one.

were doing things I was doing. You know, I suppose, I just liked to go that one step further than people.

However, while Jennifer was generally able to make finely tuned judgements about what resistant behaviours she could engage in without being caught and risking alienation from the religious, in one incident she misjudged the outcome. On this occasion, two older children and Jennifer ran away from the school, were caught and brought back. Her recollection of it being 'an adventure' echoes a similar attempt by Marie and her sister, although for Jennifer her reference to being 'defiant' suggests a degree of resistance.

JE: The police took us back and they had the whole congregation lined up there on that Kerever Park verandah and every single nun in that congregation was standing there to meet us. I don't know why. We felt pretty bad and, dear Reverend Mother McGee . . . was there and her face just looked so sad, just so sad I think that hurt, I think I realised just how much I had hurt her. She was the one that made me feel dreadful because she looked so sad. We had to go up and say sorry to God in the chapel and I remember we didn't even have to wear our mantillas. It was pretty urgent . . . we had to go up and say we were sorry and then we were kept away, no one was meant to speak to us for a couple of days and we had to write and tell our parents what we had done . . . I think we were being defiant and we were going on an adventure and I think I was easily led by these two older girls and I think we realised by the time we got half way along the Wingecarribee River that we had gone too far and we'd have to keep going. Really, it's silly isn't it.

Later she defined an adventure as 'going beyond the bounds of what you were allowed to do'.

She found adventures in a number of books, including her favourite spiritual reading - the life of St John Bosco. Her description of the story is reminiscent of the current genre of horror stories and films. 'The only reason I used to get his out was because I thought it was exciting. He'd have these dreams about actually going down to hell and he would wake up and his hands would be burnt or something more exciting than all the

others.' Jennifer also remembered reading the *Famous Five* series of books by Enid Blyton. In these books, the children acted independently of parents, sometimes they directly resisted the directions of adults and always such actions led to exciting adventures. Yet, as in these stories where all works out well in the end and the children are reconciled with the adults, in spite of her resistant behaviour Jennifer felt cared for by Lillian McGee and adopted behaviours Jennifer perceived as being expected by her: 'That we would all be good and holy around her.'

In the extract quoted previously, Jennifer reflected her desire to find a balance between resistance and conformity: 'It [going a 'bit too far'] somehow kept me balanced . . . I thought I still want to be free and easy. Other than that I quite enjoyed the school work we did.' Jennifer's balance between resisting the expectations associated with school ideology and her general ability to avoid resistance which would completely alienate her, allowed her to attain a sense of agency within the school culture. On one hand, it seems that certain of her resistant actions were valued by the community of children - it was two older children who included her in the running away experience. Yet her effort and ability in other areas were also valued by the religious. She remembered being 'good on the piano and singing' and had a main part in one of the special school plays. She was also 'good' at English expression and her sixth grade teacher 'would always make a show' of her compositions and ask her to read them aloud to the class. Her sixth grade teacher - who happened to be Elly, at this time a religious and mistress of discipline - seemed to provide her with a model of someone who managed to maintain the balance between freedom and conformity.

JE: I always enjoyed Sister . . . when I was at school. She was my class mistress in year six and, um, I thought she was dynamic, really fun . . . just that she was very good, or this is how I remember it, being good on the piano and singing and I think you know I had a part in one of the plays, one of the main parts, Frederick the Pirate in *Pirates of Penzance*. I really enjoyed all that kind of thing and I so admired her because she was so into getting

it going, that type of thing. She was fairly strict as well. I think I looked up to her and admired her very much . . . I think I just admired her as a person. I think she was modern, with the times or with our times then . . . Just because I think she had more of the joy of life, fun, was more outgoing.

It was also Elly who Gabrielle considered 'could be a winner' and, like Jennifer, she was drawn to her but at the same time fearful of her strictness.

Jennifer was aware that not all children were treated sympathetically by the religious. She recalled a child who had a chronic condition being chastised and told that she was 'putting it on . . . I remember thinking how hard and harsh they were with this girl.' Like Gabrielle, Jennifer was aware of the power relations in the community of children, the 'pecking order' in the playground and the school bullies who 'used to have these games of torture and tying girls up'. Her defence was to 'keep well away from them'.

Apart from gaining a sense of agency through her competency in school related activities, Jennifer also gained a sense of agency through appealing to her parents. When her parents came to visit her once a year on Parents' Day, after which she would spend the night with them, she would sob when she was being returned and refuse to go. This behaviour resulted in her father being so upset he would ask the mistress general if she could stay out an extra night. The answer was always affirmative and Jennifer believed that she was the only student who 'always' had 'one extra night'. She also acted on her own behalf when she asked her mother if she would write to the school and ask that she be let off eating fish. (Her way of dealing with the fish before this exemption was to put it up her sleeve and throw it away when she left the dining room.) Her action on her own behalf and the response of the mistress general stands in stark contrast to the two sisters who refused to eat all their food and were punished severely for it. Her parents' actions on her behalf also led to her gaining a sense of importance among the children. When her father gave the

school a pet budgerigar to make up for the pets she missed at home, she recalled that 'people would say, Jenny's Dad gave that bird to the school. It made you feel proud.'

As a child, Jennifer considered herself to be popular but without any close friends. Perhaps this was the price of her commitment to going one step further than the others. In contrast to the lack of close friends in childhood, her adult friends are from that period. Her closest friend in adulthood is a person who attended Kerever Park with her. In the interview, she also turned to these early experiences, shared with others from that time, to construct her childhood subjectivity.

JE: I've got friends that were at Kerever Park, so that says something doesn't it? . . . It probably means that there were kids at school who were probably from a similar background that you went through your school days with and you still had something in common with and perhaps that was one of the things that you had in common and it kept you together later on . . . a rural background with loving parents. A happy rural upbringing.

Jennifer stated that Kerever Park brought back 'fond memories' for her. In reflecting on the nature of these memories, she turned to a discourse of safety. 'It was a pretty safe existence except of course when you went for walks outside the school properties.' This safety was extended to the meaning she found in religion and in her discussion about this aspect of the school she struggled with the tension between safety and freedom.

JE: I did love the religious aspect of Kerever Park. I loved the Benediction and the holiness but I often wonder about religion in your life, whether, I often wonder about the influences whether it is altogether a good thing or not. I often think, the times I've clung to religion to help me through bad times but at other times I thought, well, was it too big a part of my life? That you kind of were scared and nervous about doing things because you were told it was a mortal sin. It was very strict then, the Catholic church, wasn't it? And I think that's a big hangover we've got, a lot of us.

As a child, she was fascinated by being taught that God was 'infinite' and remembered looking at the stars at night and trying to understand what being infinite meant: 'I'd try to project myself and think, Oh, I'm there and then I just keep going.' Her childhood image of God was one who keeps you safe but who also demands certain behaviours, and who is also vengeful and hence to be feared: 'It used to be so cut and dried [bangs the table]. Now that was really scary stuff - that you were going to end up going to hell because you missed Mass on Sunday. Now that was horrible.' Perhaps it was this fear that fed her fascination with the stories of St John Bosco's descent into hell. This fear continued with her into adulthood.

JE: I was frightened and also I think the fact that it's still a bit of a hang over. I think it's very hard to get rid of that fear even as an adult, you think , oh dear! . . . We were also taught about perfect and imperfect contrition. That you should really be sorry for your sins but imperfect contrition would do if you would try and feel really sorry for your sins. You know. Sometimes it is really hard to go and try [emphasis] to feel really sorry so quite often you wonder, I kind of wonder where I am going to end up. You know? So there is still a bit of fear left over from my early religious education, that I mightn't go to heaven, that I mightn't be floating around happily in the thereafter.

Due to personal circumstance, Jennifer is now confronted, as were her parents due to their circumstances, with having to send one of her two primary aged children to boarding school. In confronting this decision, she struggled in the interview to find meaning in it with which she can feel a degree of resolution. While she questioned the 'cocoon' of safety at Kerever Park, she also turned to her understanding of this safety to find meaning, in regards to her decision to board her son.

JE: Well I just think that the world we live in isn't as safe or we are more conscious of the dangers that are around for our children than perhaps we were then. Perhaps they were around then but we weren't aware of them. Do you feel that? . . . I suppose if you look at . . . [name of school her son attends] where my son is. It's a very safe environment . . . because of guidelines and the people have rules put in place that have to be adhered to and if

they are not adhered to usually someone knows about it so they are conscious of the safety angles.

She also offers safety to her son by saying the guardian angel prayer she learnt as a child: 'Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here. Ever this night be at my side, to light and guide, to rule and guard.' Her son does not attend a Catholic boarding school as there is not one in her vicinity and she has chosen to place him where she is able to visit him regularly and take him home as much as possible. An outcome of this decision is that on Sundays, rather than attending Mass in a Catholic Church, she attends the religious service at the school. Another constraint to her attending Mass is her other son who is disabled. In this discussion about her lack of attendance at Mass, it is possible to gain insight into conflicting subjectivities, that of being a mother, a Catholic, and a person with her own needs.

JE: Well I've got a son at a school which is not Catholic and he's very involved with their choir and we go to that service and if . . . [name of other son] is home it's a nightmare to take him to that service anyway. You know, so it goes on. I'm sure God forgives me anyway. All the same, I'm conscious of the fact that I should try to practise my religion more than I do.

The tension between the safety offered by God and her fear of the consequences of any wrongdoing on her part continues in her adulthood.

Conclusion

The memories of those interviewed reflect the dominant educational ideology of the school: an education in which the central preoccupation was the teaching of religious beliefs, obedience and conformity to those in authority; aspiring to perfection; memorisation as a key teaching strategy; and, preparation for the gendered role of womanhood. All those interviewed stressed that religion was central within the school and that the particular emphasis, apart from learning the beliefs of the Church, was on prayer. Associated with this preoccupation was the construction of

God as possibly benevolent if certain requirements were met, yet if the requirements of this distant, male and watchful God were not met there was the veiled threat of punishment and perhaps catastrophe. The perceived power relations of the school were a hierarchy, with God as the ultimate authority. The mistress general reflected this image of God - the ultimate authority in the school, demanding of respect yet at times warm and benevolent. Beneath her were the religious who also demanded respect but at times explored spontaneity and freedom. On the bottom of the hierarchy were the children who, through conforming as closely as possible to what was expected of them, were able at times to gain recognition and reward. Those who did not conform usually received some form of punishment which seemed designed to isolate and humiliate them.

While the stated educational aspirations of the Society, as discussed in chapter three, focused on intellectual rigour, the reality at Kerever Park was often that teaching was associated with the memorisation of content and perfection in the presentation of work. Preparation for the gendered role of womanhood was undertaken overtly, through a lack of emphasis on the sciences and a focus on the allegedly womanly arts of sewing, darning and knitting. This preparation was also achieved indirectly. The order was enclosed and the children were confined to the school grounds. The focus was on safety, perhaps due to the fact that many were quite young children, but this focus also seems to have been located in gender, at least in the understandings offered by the ex-students. The religious, unlike most priests, were confined to the grounds of the school on the basis of their sex. The children, unlike the boys at nearby Chevalier College, were also confined to the school grounds. As the interview with Gabrielle attests, a link can be made between gender and safety which denies movement in the larger world sphere. The additional emphasis on safety from God if the rules were kept added to the possible dangers of action. In her recent book *Love and Freedom*, Mackinnon cites Trudie Knijn's argument that it is women who must 'solve the contradiction'

between care (family life) and autonomy (career).⁶⁵ Within the narratives of the students, it is possible to identify what perhaps may be a childhood expression of this tension - a tension between the security of the demands of family life and the freedom to pursue their own actions. A number of the students found security in the safety of the social order of Kerever Park. In public they aligned themselves with the dominant discourses and found agency through investing themselves in behaviours associated with these discourses. However, away from the gaze of the religious they explored, to varying degrees, behaviours outside what was accepted. In contrast, Judith in particular, aligned herself with notions of freedom and the right to choose her own actions. The consequences for her were isolation within the social order of the school and some regret in later life over losses associated with this course of action. Yet however each student positioned herself in relation to the dominant discourses, it was possible to locate within each narrative a degree of tension between the rewards and safety of alignment and a desire for freedom from the restrictions of that order.

The memories of those interviewed also reveal further commonality in the experience: the lack of preparation for what boarding school actually meant; the need for a close fit between expectations in home life and those of the school if the child was to adapt; the impact of early experiences within the school in positioning the child within the power relations; the prevalence of a sense of isolation from home life and the associated homesickness; the desire to achieve some personal agency within the school setting; the forming of close links with other children which have lasted well into adulthood; and the seeking of escape from the demands of the social order and the restricted confines of the school through imaginary play and books. Yet, while these interviews reveal the commonality of some themes, they also reveal the diverse way in which the participants recall drawing meaning from various aspects of the

⁶⁵ Cited in Alison Mackinnon, *Love and freedom: professional women and the reshaping of personal life*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 225.

experience. Some students chose to identify with the values of the dominant social order of the school, yet the meanings they developed which led to this behaviour differed. For Marie and also Elly, who later joined the order, identifying with the values of the school came from a belief that they were loved; for Michelle, it was both a desire to be rewarded and a fear of isolation if she broke the rules; while, for Francis, it was the sense of agency she achieved through being competent. These students avoided resistance, although they revealed an awareness of the possibility through watching others and through the characters they met in books. In contrast, Judith, Gabrielle and Jennifer explored, to varying degrees, resistance to the dominant model, although they differed in how they did this and in the meaning they attributed to it. For example, Judith and Gabrielle's interviews reveal how, in reading the lives of martyred saints, students identified a central discourse of sacrificing your life for your religious principles. However, Judith's interview illustrates how this discourse was taken up and used, not as a way of resisting the secular world, but as a way of resisting the hegemonic practices of the school. The interviews with Emily, and with Dianne, who also joined the order, stand apart from the other interviews in that a degree of trauma seemed to dominate them. For Dianne, it was the extreme pain of separation from her parents, while for Emily it was a series of events which occurred while she was at the school.

In looking back at the experience, some who had melded with the values of the school as children were now able to question some of the practices there. In doing so, they drew on the discourse of progress. In contrast, Judith who had so actively resisted the social order as a child seemed to now hold in tension a construction of herself as contemptuous of authority and that of a difficult child who needed understanding. Gabrielle maintained her position as an outsider but considered that she had the social knowledge to assume an insider position with those who belong to a higher socio-economic status. It was only in Gabrielle's interview that there was any critique of the current status of women or

any critical awareness of the socio-economic status of the school. What was not resisted by any of those interviewed was a belief in God, although there was some challenging of the way in which God was constructed at that time. A number of those interviewed drew upon discourses from Freudian psychology which focus on the impact of childhood experience on adult behaviour, as a way of finding meaning in the experience. Bertaux-Wiame, as does Melucci in a similar manner, argues that the telling of a person's life story is an encounter with the past which is orientated by the present, both in the application of present perspectives to that past and in a desire to use the past to give meaning to the present.⁶⁶ The narratives of these students support this argument. Within them it is possible to gain insight into this struggle for understanding of present subjectivities through an understanding of the past. Examination of the narratives also provides insight into the tenacity of constructions of subjectivities - constructions which have their roots in childhood and which remain salient in adulthood.

⁶⁶ Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame, 'The life history approach to the study of internal migration', in Daniel Bertaux (ed.), *Biography and society, the life history approach in the social sciences*, Beverly Hills, Sage, 1981, p. 258.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This thesis is a response to Finkelstein's argument that there is a need for educational history to move away from a focus on 'structure, macro-politics and economics and the lives of the élite' towards an analysis of 'education as something experienced as well as planned'.¹ The outcome of this shift, as Finkelstein indicates, is an orientation towards the inner individual processes which lead to the shaping of consciousness and how education is used in everyday life beyond the pursuit of power and status.² As discussed in chapter one, the authors of school histories tend, in the vast majority, to focus on educational structure, with the experience of individuals being incorporated as a subsidiary theme. My response to Finkelstein's critique has been based on a desire to explore *both* structure, in particular school ideology, *and* experience in order to examine the interplay between these two constructs. Indeed, memory research based on the discursive paradigm leads to an argument that how we construct experience - indeed, what we refer to as consciousness - is dependent on the nature of the social world in which we exist and the discourses available to us in that world.

The period in which Kerever Park existed as a school was one in which those in authority, within the social order of Catholicism, considered the education of Catholic children within the walls of Catholic schools to be paramount in the battle for faith. Yet this discourse of the 'battle' against a secular world, especially for the minds and souls of its young, was not new. The Society of the Sacred Heart was founded in response to the suppression of the Church in the period of the French Revolution. While this discourse may have been fundamental in the establishment of the

1 Barbara Finkelstein, 'Educational historians as mythmakers', *Review of Research in Education*, vol. 18, 1992, p. 288.

2 *ibid.*

many convent schools in Australia, interviews with ex-students reveal that the parents who sent their children to Kerever Park were engaged in their own battle against various aspects of the world, not excluding the world of Catholic schools in which large classes and teachers committed to a focus on hell rather than heaven prevailed. In the early days of the school, they sent their children away from Sydney and threats associated with the war to the relative safety of Bowral. Subsequently, they sent their children to this school to avoid the large classes of post-war Catholic schools, to avoid their children mixing with local children of a different social status and to offer their children education within a Catholic school setting, something unavailable to many families in isolated rural settings. For some, an additional motivation was to continue a family tradition of having their children educated by the Society. Other motivations included difficulties within families, especially large families, which made the notion of a boarding school for their children attractive.

The choice of a large country home, built in the style of an English country house in a secluded rural setting, and the opportunities of a more home like atmosphere made possible by a small school setting may have attracted a number of parents. Certainly, the discourse of school as home was an important part of the aspirations which Mother McGuinness, who made the foundation, had for the school. This discourse, and that of innocent and idyllic childhood, dominated early writings about the school. Yet in spite of such aspirations, Kerever Park was a preparatory school for Rose Bay and it was the well entrenched educational aspirations for that school which ultimately prevailed. The metaphor of the school as a moulding haven was highly salient. Behind the original country house, a more institutional school was soon constructed, both in architecture and in social order.

The foundress of the Society, Madeleine Sophie, was intransigent about the importance of putting the spiritual end of education first. The 1922 Plan of Study used by the Society throughout its schools in the period of

Kerever Park bears witness to the continuance of the educational discourse of education in the service of God. The children in this system of education were not considered to be innocent, but rather as weak and in need of guidance through that stage of life. Within the social order of the Society, God, in the form of the Sacred Heart, was the focus of all actions. While the discourse of the ineffable and mysterious love of God was associated with this sacred symbol, it was the discourses of love expressed as sacrifice and suffering and that of conformity and obedience to those in authority which informed the ultimate way of service. The religious were the models for and facilitators of bringing the children to this form of service.

The children lived a life closely aligned with that of the religious. Religious rituals were central in daily life, as was living a simple life devoid of the distractions and perceived dangers of the outside, secular world. Mary, the mother of Jesus, provided the model of how this service was to be undertaken by women who, it was considered, were destined to be wives and mothers. Mary, in the form of *Mater Admirabilis*, was constructed as a self-sacrificing woman who was conforming, obedient and removed from her own desires. This construction was in keeping with the construction of Madeleine Sophie in the social memory of the order. The foundress of the order provided the ultimate model of the spiritual woman as mother to both the religious and the children.

As the work undertaken by the children was to be undertaken in service of God, so it had to be as perfect as possible. Similarly, their general behaviour was to conform as closely as possible to the expectations of those in authority. As the will of God was conveyed to the religious through their superior, so was the will of God conveyed to the children through their teachers. The children were rewarded for conformity to the expectations of those in authority. The hierarchical model portrayed in the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting was replicated within the social order of the school. Those who conformed to what was expected of them

received ribbons of honour, were closely aligned with the model of Mary and hence served God under the guidance of the religious. Those who were non-conforming were excluded from the school (missing from the picture) or tolerated in anticipation that they would eventually align themselves with the dominant social order.

Campion has argued that Irish-Australian Catholicism, until the time of Vatican Two, was based on obedience and unquestioning docility.³ The social memory of the Society, in this period, reflected this thinking. God was the ultimate authority and the religious superior was the conveyor of this authority. Her orders were to be obeyed without questioning and initiatives on the part of religious without such sanction were not to be countenanced. The power of the superior was enhanced through the nature of religious life. The religious spoke only in regard to their work. Recreation was taken with the superior as the focus and channel of all conversations. The breaking of rules, such as informal chatting with others, was synonymous with offending God. Not only were the rules of religious life maintained by those in authority but the religious themselves engaged in self monitoring through the process of examination of conscience. The effect of this order was that, while the religious ostensibly lived as a community, in fact they were individually isolated and often fearful of offending the expectations of those in authority. It was in the garden that they found relief from these expectations and there they were able to find meaning in the discourse of the mysterious and ineffable love of God.

The mistress general of the school, Lillian McGee, held that position of authority for twenty-two years. During this period, the discourses and hegemonic practices which related to authority did not change within the

³ Edmund Campion, *Rockchoppers: growing up Catholic in Australia*, Melbourne, Penguin, 1982, p. 64.

setting. She upheld her resistance to educational discourses which were child centred until after the school closed. As God was constructed as both demanding and benevolent, so too was the model of life for someone in her position similarly constructed. She was demanding in her expectations, rebuked those who did not conform, and yet at times she was also benevolent in her actions. The young religious were, within the social order of the Society, her grown up daughters and under her care and control. Her function was to continue their training as both teachers and members of the Society. All knowledge pertaining to teaching resided in her. Discourses which conflicted with those with which she was aligned, especially discourses which were more egalitarian, challenged her position as it was constructed. The social order established at Kerever Park, based on this hierarchical model, did not allow for the incorporation of new discourses by way of the young religious, even if the Society had fostered the attainment of such discourses. As Weaver argues, the religious within the Church have been kept in the role of dutiful daughters who never reach the adolescent stage.⁴ Adolescents are generally constructed as the bearers of new voices within their families. Yet the daughters of this family were brought up to regard unquestioning obedience as the critical mark of their alignment with the family.

In many ways, the isolation of the school itself reflected the isolation resident within its social order. The religious were generally confined to the convent grounds. So too were the children, except for those who were visited regularly by parents. Letters home were closely monitored and were at times dictated by the religious in charge of a particular class. Parents were visitors and not involved in the daily life of the children. The physical separation of the children from their parents resulted, for many children, in emotional separation. Unlike the religious who were denied companionship and support from each other through informal conversations, the children turned to each other. Relationships formed in

⁴ Mary Jo Weaver, *New Catholic women: a contemporary challenge to traditional religious authority*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1985, p. 73.

those early years, formed in isolation from home and local community, have maintained a resilience in adulthood, even if not nurtured through regular contact. For some children, even this was not sufficient. Surviving and being strong were the key discourses for those who did not find even the community of school friends sufficient to overcome their feelings of isolation from home. Some have carried feelings associated with loss into adulthood.

The community of children was a source of support for all, a situation of power relations to be negotiated by some and a tool for social control in the hands of those in authority. Those children who were able to negotiate successfully the expectations inherent in the social order of the school attained a sense of agency. In particular, it seemed that the early experiences within the school settings, combined with previous experiences at home and in other schools, were highly influential in determining such outcomes. Those who did not conform were isolated by being denied access to special activities and were given punishments which seemed intended to humiliate them in front of and to isolate them from their peers.

Due to the rule of silence and exclusion of particular friendships, it was more difficult for the religious to find support within the community of peers. Those who publicly aligned themselves with the dominant social order and were able to exhibit behaviours in keeping with that order received support and commendation from the mistress general. Those who did not fully align themselves had more difficulty and, like the children, received rebuke. It seems that the coadjutrix sisters, who were removed from the public life of teaching, felt freer to offer support to the young religious. Perhaps the fact that they were generally not in positions of any authority, even over children, allowed them to align themselves with others who were powerless. This alignment is in keeping with the actions by some of the young teaching religious who, at times, aligned themselves with the children by offering them affection and friendship.

Books both provided children with a form of escape from the demands of the social order of the school and also provided discourses which gave meaning to their experience. Most ex-students remembered both being read to and avidly reading themselves. Within these books, some of the children were able to find stories which seemed, through examination of the narratives, to reflect and to assist them in assigning meaning to their experiences. In some cases, they also provided discourses which gave meaning to their resistant behaviour. In contrast, the religious had little time for individual reading. In the main, the stories they remembered were those read to them in community recreation and spiritual reading time. These books, chosen by those in authority, reinforced the predominant social order of the Society. Hence, stories, often taken from the lives of the founding mothers of the order, which reflected the discourse of love expressed as sacrifice and suffering as well as the discourse of obedience and conformity to those in authority were chosen. Yet, at times, the young religious were able to find stories which gave meaning to their experience within the school and in particular to their experiences of repression under the demands of those in authority and to the difficulties associated with the austerity of their daily lives.

The school curriculum reflected the hierarchical nature of the social order of the school. Knowledge resided in the teacher and books rather than in the children. Memorisation was at the core of many lessons, yet some religious were able to move away from this focus and to offer lessons which were designed to appeal more to the interests of the children. However, educational discourses associated with progressivism were rejected by the mistress general and hence did not find a place within the school ideology. Perhaps this rejection was because of their alignment with the interests of the child rather than with the interests of those in authority. The ideology of the school placed importance on the need for the children to have a sound basic education but within this education emphasis was placed on preparation for a life of responsibility and duty, rather than on critical thinking, creativity and independence. The

children were being prepared for their role as Catholic wives and mothers and the education they required for these roles needed to be serious if they were to be competent as middle class women, with the social behaviours associated with that class. Needlework both reflected the gendered nature of the education and the commitment to being an industrious person. As such, the ability to be a competent darning was highly prized. Above all, matters of religious beliefs and faith were central. As with other children in Catholic schools of this period, they learnt the many responses of the Green Catechism off by heart. At Kerever Park, this was supplemented by memorisation of tracts of the gospels.

Even at this early age, thought was given to fostering religious vocations amongst the children. The religious stories offered to the children were centred around the discourse of love expressed as sacrifice and suffering. Martyrs were the ultimate model of taking this discourse seriously. Yet while Mary and the martyrs were presented as models of those who aligned themselves totally with the prevailing discourses for the sake of God and faith, some children took these models and created their own meanings - meanings which guided them in their resistance against the established order. Perhaps it is the surplus of meaning in icons like that of *Mater Admirabilis* and *Madeleine Sophie* which has allowed some Catholic women to resist the passive role prescribed for them by the Church and to adopt political behaviour which directly challenges that order. In the shift to a focus on the construction of consciousness in historical research, exploration of discourses which have informed such actions would make a significant contribution.

Examination of the narratives of those involved in the school, as religious and students, has provided insight into the impact of the ideology of the school and associated hegemonic practices on the construction of subjectivity. In particular, it has provided insight into how individuals aligned themselves with various discourses; for example, how some religious and students constructed themselves both

as members of the community through alignment with the acceptable discourses and yet at the same time found themselves privately resisting them. Some resistance was evident in all narratives, although the degree varied from those who openly challenged these practices to those who explored resistance only in their imaginations. As Hollway argues, alignment with a particular discourse represents an 'investment' in a particular position of power.⁵ For some, alignment with the predominant social order was rewarded by way of recognition and a degree of autonomy. For others, such alignment was not possible and in the case of one ex-student it is possible to see how the very discourses which were intended to inculcate the children into the prevailing social order provided her with a meaning which informed her resistance.

The conditions which fostered the degree of resistance were diverse. For the religious who were the bearers of different educational discourses, the source of the discourses and associated power within the social order of the Society was critical. For the children, the belief that they were supported by their parents in challenging some of the practices was a facilitating condition. Certainly, a belief that there was an alignment with a powerful group of others who had similar beliefs fostered the degree to which the person engaged in open resistance. In some cases, those who did resist believed that they were the ones who were the bearers of the true values of the Society.

The shift to the literary model of historical research in which narrative is considered both in its entirety and as performance has been helpful in analysing the narratives of those interviewed for this research. Rather than paying attention solely to content ('verifiable facts' in the model of traditional, positivist history), attention has also been paid to the overall structure of the narrative. An important gain has been that experiences

⁵ Wendy Hollway, 'Gender difference and the production of subjectivity', in Julian Henriques, Wendy Hollway, Cathy Urwin, Couze Venn & Valerie Walkerdine (eds), *Changing the subject: psychology, social regulation and subjectivity*, London, Methuen, 1984, p. 238.

which at first seemed to have no association with the task at hand have taken on a critical meaning and provided insight into how the person constructed her experience and her relationship to the order of the school.

Considering the narrative as performance which serves a rhetorical function has also provided insight into current constructions of experience. Examination of the narratives has also provided insight into how the discourses available to the participants as children, and how the children positioned themselves in relation to those discourses, have informed the construction of adult subjectivity. Such exploration has made it possible to see how contemporary discourses of progress and Freudian psychology were drawn upon to provide meanings which were in keeping with current understandings of society and self. In particular, it evidences poststructuralist contentions that we construct the world according to the discourses which are available to us. Yet, in addition to such insight, it is possible to see how individual struggle for meaning resulted in diverse outcomes in the meaning each person assigned to various experiences. This diversity resulted from the influence of experiences and associated discourses both before and after their time at the school.

Emphasis on experience has resulted in a focus on the stories of those who have usually been marginalised in traditional school histories - students, ordinary teachers and, in this setting, the coadjutrix sisters. While there was one mistress general at this school for the entire period of its operation, no chapter has been devoted to her. Rather, her story has been incorporated through the memories of those interviewed. References to her indicate that she, like the other religious who staffed the school, constructed herself in keeping with the prevailing discourses of the Society at the time. Yet it is also possible to identify times when her behaviour, such as adopting practices outside those generally accepted by the Society, reflected some resistance. It was only after she left that

position, after the school closed, that she was able to change significantly her alignment with discourses of control and conformity.

The theoretical underpinnings of this thesis, which informed analysis of the ideology and the experience of those involved, have allowed a critical examination of the social order and associated hegemonic practices of the school. This process stands in contrast with that adopted in school histories in which the focus is on the public face of the school, on ideology, planning and structure, and which usually results in the subordination of individual meaning to the ideological meaning of the institution. Additionally, the shift to a focus on experience has made central the stories of those usually marginalised in school histories - ordinary teachers and students. Exploration of the experiences of these two groups has resulted in deconstructing the authority and legitimacy of constructions of the school as an ideal setting for happy childhood. Instead, it has facilitated an exploration of the social order and associated discourses, as well as an examination of the various ways in which individuals, both in the past and present, found meaning in and positioned themselves in relation to those discourses. Such a finding supports the central contention of this thesis - that in writing school histories there is a need to focus on the lived experience as well as on ideology.

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APPENDIX I

GENERAL METHODOLOGY

Ethics

Ethics approval for this research was sought and obtained from the Ethics Committee at Sydney University in 1995 (see Appendix III). I also approached, by way of letter, Sister Philomene Tiernan, the Australian superior of the order so as to gain her approval for the project. She told me, in a phone conversation, that she was happy for me to interview any of the religious I chose to interview.

Participant Identification and Selection

Fourteen interviews were conducted with religious and ex-students in total - seven religious and seven ex-students. Two religious were also ex-students of the school.

Information regarding ex-students was obtained from a list of ex-students put together for the fifty year reunion of those associated with Kerever Park. This list had originally been taken from the School Register and included current addresses of a number of ex-students. Ex-students were selected for this research so as to represent a spectrum of the twenty-two years of the school's operation.

An interview was also conducted with Enid and Charles Stevenson who worked as ancillary staff at the school for most of the time it operated. As discussed earlier, this interview was used to provide additional information rather than presented as a case study. However, a transcript was developed from it and the protocol used with regard to other participants applied.

Information regarding the religious at the school was taken from the Annual Catalogue of the Society of the Sacred Heart in which the deployment of religious in various schools is listed year by year.¹

Many of the religious who served at Kerever Park are no longer alive. The mistress general of the school died in 1982 and only one of the coadjutrix sisters is still alive. Some were working in other countries and states, so that the possible population was reduced given that those interviewed were religious who were accessible from Sydney. In one case, I was interviewing one religious and she directed me to another who was visiting Sydney from inter-state. As a result, part of the interviews between these two religious were conducted jointly. In total, six choir nuns and one coadjutrix sister were interviewed.

Participants were generally approached by an initial letter (see Appendix IV) which included the participant information sheet (see Appendix V) and a copy of the participant consent form (see Appendix VI). This initial contact was followed by a telephone call in which I went over the goals and the methodology of the project with the prospective participants. It was made clear that they were free to decline and, if they agreed to go ahead, I would like to tape the interview. Subsequently, I would transcribe the interview and send it to them, together with a copy of the tape for them to keep, so that they could go through it and decide if they were happy with it. I explained that they were free to change the transcript in any way. I would then ask them to send the transcript back for me to edit in the alterations and send it back to them for final approval. At this stage, a release form (Appendix VII) would be sent which included a space for any restrictions they cared to include. They would be given a copy of the final version of the transcript to keep. The participants were told that they were under no obligation to participate and could withdraw at any time. All religious agreed to be interviewed. Three ex-students declined. One

¹ Society of the Sacred Heart, *Annual catalogue of the Society of the Sacred Heart*, Part 1, Rome, 1945 - 1965. An annual catalogue for 1944 was not included due to the war.

did not respond to my initial letter (I did not have her phone number and I left it to her to contact me), one stated that she did not have time and one said that she would prefer not to participate.

I stressed that their participation and all tapes, transcripts would be kept confidential except that, as I was doing a doctorate, my examiners might wish to see the transcripts or listen to the tapes. I assured them that I would work to ensure as much confidentiality as possible, especially by not showing the transcripts to anyone, beyond my examiners, supervisors and a possible research assistant, not discussing with anyone the names of those I interviewed, and by expressing a willingness to protect them in whatever way they wanted, perhaps by using pseudonyms. However, I did point out that in such a small community of ex-students and religious I could not guarantee total anonymity and that someone might be able to identify them within my writing. I also noted that, at the end of my research and when my work had been examined, I would contact them to ask them what they wanted done with the master tape and transcript of their interview. One option is for them be deposited in the Rose Bay archives, another option is for me to keep them or to send them back to them - the possibility of publication of this thesis might extend the time I keep them. At present, until this thesis is fully examined, I have all master tapes and transcripts.

I knew five of the religious previously (three from my time at Kerever Park as a student). I knew three of the ex-students, two from my time at the school and one from contact in a later social situation. I chose the last person because she was very involved in the Kerever Park community after it was closed down as a school. I wanted to include someone who had such ongoing links and who obviously felt very positively towards the school. When I contacted the other ex-students, there was only one who I knew, prior to the interview, had found the school experience a difficult one.

When participants agreed to go ahead, I said that I needed about two hours of their time and that I was happy to come to their home or to meet them somewhere else. All were happy for me to do so, although one ex-student met me at the university where I work for her first interview, as this was more convenient for her. I went to her home for the second interview. This second interview was set up because the recording on one side of the tape had not worked and also she was the one ex-student who seemed to require a second interview due to having much to say. I interviewed five of the religious twice and two once. The reasons for the second interviews were that I found that these people had a lot to say and one interview seemed incomplete. I found that an hour and a half was as much as both participants and I were able to cope with, so I made a second appointment with these people. In the case of the other two religious, the interviews did not go for the entire hour and a half and it seemed that they had finished saying what they needed to say in a lesser amount of time. No interview went for less than one hour.

In regards to the ex-students, all seemed to run out of things to say under one and a half hours except for one whom I went back and interviewed again later. I told each person that, if they thought of extra things they wished to add, they could make a second appointment or add it into the transcript. None took up this offer and, when they checked the transcripts, no one added any significantly extra material beyond minor changes. I also offered to meet with participants whom I did not know before the interview but only one, an ex-student, took me up on this offer. In this instance, I called in and spent about an hour chatting with her before coming back for the interview.

In setting up the interview with each participant, I indicated that it was important that we had a quiet space where there was little chance of being interrupted. This worked in most cases, but not all. Sometimes young children needed attention, husbands needed to speak to wives or unexpected callers interrupted the interviews. However, in no case did I

feel that these interruptions undermined the integrity of the interview. I simply stopped the tape and re-started it, reminding them what they were speaking about. When I arrived at the participant's home, I discussed the participant's information, collected the signed consent form, set up my small tape recorder and, after some initial small talk, started my interview.

At the beginning of each interview, I included on the tape the name of the person I was interviewing, my name, the date and place of the interview, my relationship to the participant (e.g., 'I knew . . . as a child as she was a teacher at the school when I was at Kerever Park.') and asked the person to state if they were happy for me to tape the interview. I then moved into the format I had adopted for undertaking these interviews, beginning with the following question.

We are here to talk about being at school/being a religious at Kerever Park; so how would you like to start in telling me about that experience?

Transcript Production

Transcripts were developed from the tapes by word processing onto my personal computer. Long pauses, voice intonation, laughs, sighs, etc. were indicated. As far as possible, except when it was not possible to decipher what was being said, the exact words of the participant were put into the transcript. These transcripts and a copy of the tape were then sent back to the person for their approval. Changes requested by participants were edited into the computer copy and a final copy sent back to the person along with a release form. All were happy to sign the form, except one religious who wanted me to show her what I included in my thesis from her interview. I did this, we reached agreement and she signed the form. A thank you letter was included with the final transcript.

APPENDIX III

ETHICS APPROVAL



UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
SYDNEY N.S.W. 2006
HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE
ROOM N334, MAIN QUAD, A14
TELEPHONE 351 4811 FAX 351 6706

Dr C Campbell
School of Social & Policy Studies in Education
A35

1 November 1995

Dear Campbell,

The Human Ethics Committee at its meeting on 30 October 1995 considered your protocol.

Title: A history of Kerever Park: the lived experience

Ref No: 95/10/2

It was the Committee's opinion that there were no ethical objections to the project being undertaken.

The procedures outlined in the protocol must be adhered to.

Please note, the Subject Information Sheet and Consent Form must be on University of Sydney letterhead and must include the full title of the research project and telephone contacts for the researchers.

The following statement must appear on the Subject Information Sheet:

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Secretary of the Human Ethics Committee, University of Sydney on (02) 351 4811.

The NH&MRC Statement on Human Experimentation "Supplementary Note 1" states that Institutional Ethics Committees (IEC) must provide surveillance of research projects until completion of the protocol.

In accordance with these guidelines, approval for the protocol is given on the understanding that you will provide the Committee with a progress report of not more than (one) page in length on your research, by no later than 30 November 1996.

Approval has been given for one year and renewal is contingent upon the provision of the progress report.

Yours sincerely,

Dr J D G Watson
Chair
Human Ethics Committee

c.c. Ms C Trimmingham, Education Foundations Department, Australian Catholic University

APPENDIX II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Religious

Suzanne B.

Interview one. 25 October 1995.

Interview two. 3 November 1995.

Mary D.

Interview one. 7 September 1995.

Interview two. 25 September 1995.

Catherine K.

Interview one. 18 March 1996.

Dianne G. (Also an ex-student.)

Interview one. 1 April 1996.

Elly B. (Also an ex-student.)

Interview one. 9 August 1995.

Interview two. 18 August 1995 (The first part of this interview was conducted individually and the second part in conjunction with Elizabeth R.)

Elizabeth R.

Interview one. 18 August 1995 (The first part of this interview was conducted with Elly B. and the second part individually.)

Interview two. 2 September 1995.

Patricia R.

Interview one. 3 October 1995.

Interview two. 10 October 1995.

Ex-Students

Emily D. (sister of Michelle F.)

Interview one. 21 May 1996.

Michelle F. (sister of Emily D.)

Interview one. 5 June 1996.

Marie M.

Interview one. 18 April 1996.

Francis T.

Interview one. 4 December 1996.

Judith H.
Interview one. 1 June 1996.

Gabrielle D.
Interview one. 9 July 1996.
Interview two. 31 August 1996.

Jennifer E.
Interview one. 18 November 1996.

Ancillary Staff

Enid and Charles Stevenson.
Interview one. 30 June 1996.

APPENDIX IV

INITIAL CONTACT LETTER

22 Mataranka street
Hawker 2614
[date]

Dear.....,

I am writing to you to enlist your support and possible involvement in a project which I am currently undertaking. The project involves writing a history of Kerever Park, the junior boarding school of Rose Bay [EX-STUDENTS which I believe you attended in your primary years.] [RELIGIOUS - where you served for a period of time]. I am hoping to write a history which reflects not only what happened there, in a chronological sense, but also what it was like to actually attend this school. As there are few primary boarding schools left in Australia it is important to record the history of Kerever Park and especially what it was like for students who attended it and what that experience means to them now.

In order to write this history I am contacting ex-students and religious in hope that you will be willing to participate in some interviews with me. I am also seeking any materials you have which could be relevant, such as, letters you wrote home, school reports, samples of school work, photographs, etc. If you have any such material I would, of course, be willing to copy it and return it to you.

This history will form the basis of my doctoral studies being undertaken at Sydney University, however, as an ex-student of Kerever Park myself, I hope that the history will be a contribution to the community of ex-students and religious as well as to those interested in the history of education in Australia.

If you would like to contact me to discuss the project my phone number is 06 254 6939. I include also some information about the project and an initial consent form. I will be in contact with you shortly and look forward to discussing the possibility of your involvement then.

Yours sincerely,

Christine Trimingham Jack

APPENDIX V

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
SYDNEY N.S.W. 2006

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

A HISTORY OF KEREVER PARK: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE

You are invited to take part in a research study into the history of Kerever Park School. All those who were associated with the school in any way are invited to participate. The focus of this history will be on the 'lived experience' of the school. This experience will then be linked to the social and religious influences of the period in which the school was open.

The study is being conducted by Christine Trimmingham Jack, Lecturer, Education Foundations Department, Mount St Mary Campus, Australian Catholic University and a doctoral student at the University of Sydney. This project is the focus of her doctoral studies.

If you agree to participate in this study, it will involve participating in one or more interviews of approximately an hour to an hour and a half each that, with your permission, will be tape recorded.

All aspects of the study will be strictly confidential (unless you give permission for your name to be used) and only the instigator named above and her clerical assistant will have access to information about participants. Reports of the study may be submitted by the investigator for publication, but individual participants need not be identified in such reports. You will be supplied with a duplicate copy of any taped interviews in which you participate. If you give your permission for the material contained on the tape to be used in the research, then you sign the release form. This form also contains a section entitled: RESTRICTIONS. In this section, you may include any limits you wish to put on the use of any or all of the information contained in the tape. You may also indicate here if you do not want to have your name used in association with the material.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and, if you do participate, you can withdraw at any time.

When you have read this information, Christine Trimmingham Jack will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Christine Trimmingham Jack, Lecturer, Education Foundations Department, Mount St Mary Campus, Australian Catholic University, 179 Albert Road, Strathfield NSW 2135, phone (02) 730 2248. This information sheet is for you to keep.

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Secretary of the Human Ethic Committee, University of Sydney on (02) 351 4811.

APPENDIX VI

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



A HISTORY OF KEREVER PARK: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, _____

OF _____

have read and understood the Information for Participants Form in the above named research study and have discussed it with the researcher Christine Trimingham Jack. I understand that, even though I sign this consent form, I am free to withdraw from this research at any time.

SIGNED:

DATE:

Christine Trimingham Jack
02 739 2248

APPENDIX VII

RELEASE FORM

A HISTORY OF KEREVER PARK: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE

RELEASE FORM

I (name in full).....
give permission for Christine Trimmingham Jack to use information
contained in tape recordings of interviews (listed below) for use in
research for her doctoral studies undertaken at the University of
Sydney and which relate to the history of Kerever Park.

The interviews for which I grant this permission are as follows:

Interview Number: Date: Place:

Interview Number: Date: Place:

NARRATOR -----

ADDRESS -----

RESTRICTIONS -----

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX VIII

STUDENT NUMBERS, NUMBER OF TEACHING RELIGIOUS, AND STAFF : STUDENT RATIO PER YEAR

Year	Total Student Population	Number of Teaching Religious#	Staff : Student ratio
1944	44	-	-
1945	43	5	1 : 8.6
1946	43	6	1 : 7.2
1947	48	6	1 : 8.0
1948	54	5	1 : 10.8
1949	59	5	1 : 11.8
1950	60	5	1 : 12.0
1951	62	5	1 : 12.4
1952	60	5	1 : 12.0
1953	59	6	1 : 11.8
1954	59	6	1 : 11.8
1955	65	6	1 : 10.8
1956	66	6	1 : 11.0
1957	60	7	1 : 8.6
1958	58	6	1 : 9.7
1959	65	7**	1 : 9.3
1960	61	7	1 : 8.7
1961	59	6	1 : 9.8
1962	59	7	1 : 8.4
1963	62	7	1 : 8.9
1964	60	7	1 : 8.6
1965	60	5	1 : 12.0

Compiled from figures are taken from: Society of the Sacred Heart, *Annual catalogue of the Society of the Sacred Heart*, Part 1, Rome, 1945-1965. No Catalogue was produced for the year 1944 owing to the war.

These figures are the number of choir nuns involved with the children. They do not include the coadjutrix sisters or the superior of the religious community.

** From 1959 onwards, Lillian McGee was both the mistress general and the superior of the religious community.

APPENDIX IX

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION of STUDENTS' HOMES BY YEAR OF ENTRY AND TOTAL ENTRY EACH YEAR

(Numbers with percentages in brackets.)

Year	Sydney	Property	Regional City	Rural town	Local	Overseas/ Interstate	Total
1944	24 (54.5)	8 (18.2)	4 (9.1)	1 (2.3)	6 (13.6)	1 (2.3)	44
1945	6 (40.0)	5 (33.3)	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	-	-	15
1946	9 (64.3)	3 (21.4)	-	1 (7.1)	1 (7.1)	-	14
1947	13 (65.0)	2 (10.0)	2 (10.0)	3 (15.0)	-	-	20
1948	10 (62.5)	6 (37.5)	-	-	-	-	16
1949	2 (11.1)	12 (66.7)	1 (5.6)	1 (5.6)	-	2 (11.1)	18
1950	5 (26.3)	6 (31.6)	-	4 (21.1)	1 (5.3)	3 (15.8)	19
1951	5 (29.4)	12 (70.6)	-	-	-	-	17
1952	-	2 (66.7)	-	1 (33.3)	-	-	3
1953	8 (42.1)	6 (31.6)	1 (5.3)	4 (21.1)	-	-	19
1954	1 (4.5)	16 (72.7)	2 (9.1)	2 (9.1)	1 (4.5)	-	22
1955	11 (42.3)	9 (34.6)	1 (3.8)	3 (11.5)	1 (3.8)	1 (3.8)	26
1956	1 (5.3)	14 (73.7)	1 (5.3)	3 (15.8)	-	-	19
1957	8 (47.1)	4 (23.5)	-	1 (5.9)	-	4 (23.5)	17
1958	7 (31.8)	15 (68.2)	-	-	-	-	22
1959	6 (24.0)	10 (40.0)	-	5 (20.0)	1 (4.0)	3 (12.0)	25
1960	8 (42.1)	4 (21.1)	-	5 (26.3)	1 (5.3)	1 (5.3)	19
1961	6 (35.3)	2 (11.8)	2 (11.8)	7 (41.2)	-	-	17
1962	4 (20.0)	13 (65.0)	-	1 (5.0)	1 (5.0)	1 (5.0)	20
1963	6 (26.1)	9 (39.1)	-	4 (17.4)	2 (8.7)	2 (8.7)	23
1964	6 (33.3)	5 (27.8)	1 (5.6)	4 (22.2)	-	2 (11.1)	18
1965	3 (17.6)	9 (52.9)	-	2 (11.8)	1 (5.9)	2 (11.8)	17
Total	149 (34.7)	172 (40.0)	17 (4.0)	54 (12.6)	16 (3.7)	20 (5.2)	430

Source: Kerever Park, School register, unpublished material, 1944-1965,
Rose Bay archives, Sydney.

Notes: 'Local' refers to student addresses in the Bowral, Burradoo, Moss
Vale and Mittagong region.

APPENDIX X

AGE OF STUDENTS AT ENTRY AND STUDENT LENGTH OF STAY

Age of Students at Entry, by Number and Percentage

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
4	1	0.2
5	21	4.9
6	60	14.0
7	64	14.9
8	69	16.1
9	73	17.0
10	77	17.9
11	46	11.0
12	16	3.7
13	1	0.2
<i>Total</i>	429*	99.9

Source: Kerever Park, School register, unpublished material, 1944-1965, Rose Bay archives, Sydney.

* Note: Age at entry for one student not recorded.

Student Length of Stay by Numbers and Percentages

<i>Length of Stay</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
≤1 term	13	3.1
2 terms	6	1.4
1 year	93	21.8
2 years	95	22.3
3 years	83	19.5
4 years	50	11.7
5 years	40	9.4
6 years	30	7.0
7 years	12	2.8
8 years	4	0.9
<i>Total</i>	426*	99.9

Source: Kerever Park, School register, unpublished material, 1944-1965, Rose Bay archives, Sydney.

* Note: Four students had no length of stay included in their registration.

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